CHILD LIFE IN CHINA

BY MARY BRYSON

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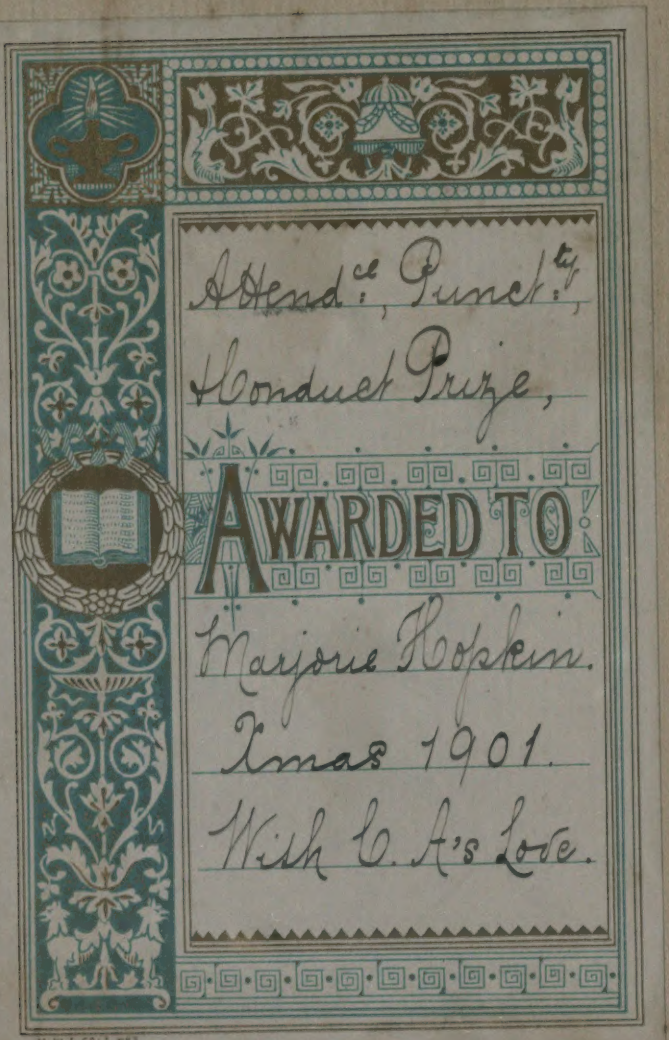
A Headᵉ Punchᵗʸ,
Conduct Prize,
AWARDED TO
Marjorie Hopkins.
Xmas 1901.
With C. A's Love.

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A GROUP OF HIGH-CLASS CHINESE CHILDREN.

CHILD LIFE IN CHINA

BY MRS. BRYSON OF THE
LONDON MISSION
TIENTSIN
CHINA

WITH MANY ILLUSTRATIONS

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY
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A CHINESE WAIF.

PREFACE

My first home in China was the city of Wuchang-fu, six hundred miles up the great Yang-tse-kiang. When I arrived there, how extraordinary the little pig-tailed boys and small-footed girls looked to me, and how much I wished to be able to understand them when they were chattering away to each other in words which sounded so strange to me!

After a while I learned to speak to them in their own language. They would follow me in large numbers along the narrow streets, and gather round me wonderingly as I sat down on the green slopes of their city wall. By and by some of them came to our schools, and became very well known to me.

Many Chinese children have paid me constant visits at the

Mission House, the sick coming for medicines, the poor and those who were in trouble for relief and comfort. Not a few who were well and strong came also with their relatives to make friendly calls, and look at the strange things that were to be found in a 'foreigner's' house.

I have sojourned with Chinese children in their own little cottages among the mountains, and travelled with the boatmen's families across some of the great Chinese lakes, and down the broad river.

Some of them I have visited in their ancient homes, surrounded by lofty whitewashed walls, looking very gloomy outside, and very comfortless within, notwithstanding much grandeur of carved wood and painting.

The acquaintance of other children has been made as they crouched, half starved with cold and hunger, within the frail mat shed which they called home. Many a talk I have had with their mothers about our children; and the better I knew them the more earnestly I longed to do them good and make them happy. And now I want you to become acquainted with these Chinese children too.

You cannot all take the long journey to China, so I will tell you something of what I have seen, and write out for you the stories of a few of my young Chinese friends. When you have read the book, I trust that, knowing much more about China's children, you will wish to do more than you have ever done before to make them as happy as you are.

Should this be so, I shall feel very thankful and glad that I have told you a little of what I have seen and heard in the great land of China.

MARY ISABELLA BRYSON.

A VIEW AT HANKOW.

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A CHINESE PEEP-SHOW.

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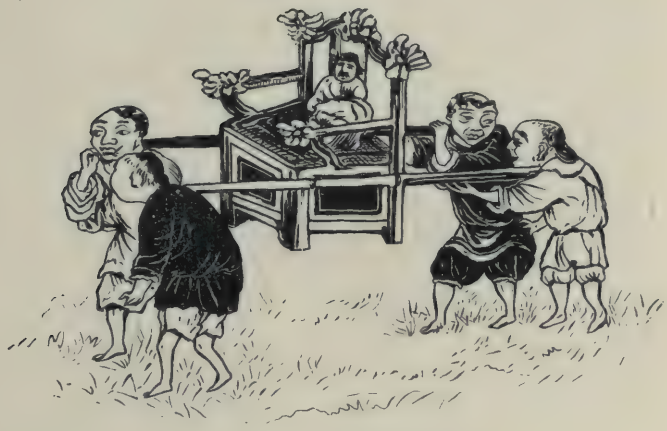


AN IDOL PROCESSION.

A CHINESE FAMILY.

A CHINESE BABY.

CHAPTER I

THE CHINESE BABY

PIGTAIL and almond-shaped eyes were the characteristic features of John Chinaman, or rather of the picture which fancy painted of him in my childhood's days.

My ideas upon the subject were gleaned from close study of the tea-chests, adorned with strange-looking figures in impossible attitudes, and from kindred works of art, painted on delicate chinaware.

I used to dream over the willow-pattern plate, with its wonderful picture-story. The bridge over which the three Celestials were running, the extraordinary foliage of the trees,

the queer little boat with its one sailor, and the two doves which, hovering in mid-air, surveyed the scene—all were objects of the keenest interest to me. It is a long time now since the days of which I am writing, yet the far-off 'Middle Kingdom' and its strange inhabitants have only grown in attractiveness to me.

For many years past, my home has been within its boundaries; and to-day it seems almost as much 'my ain countree' as the shores of dear old England.

Remembering, therefore, my youthful interest in that distant and wonderful land, I will ask you to walk with me through Chinese streets, to enter the strange homes so different from your own, to listen to the accents of the ancient language spoken by the people, and to make the acquaintance of some of the boys and girls whose lot has been cast there.

It is a long journey of more than ten thousand miles which I am asking you to take, before we shall reach the shores of that vast empire which is larger even than the continent of Europe, and is inhabited by more than a quarter of the human family.

In so large a country we have naturally every variety of climate. We have also lofty mountains whose peaks are always capped with snow, and mighty rivers, one of which, the grand Yang-tse-kiang, is the longest in all Asia. In the interior there are immense plains and splendid water communication. The Grand Canal, originally more than six hundred miles in length, unites the Yang-tse with the Yellow River, connecting Peking in the north with Hangchow in the centre.

Far away to the north rises the Great Wall of China, more than twelve hundred miles in length. It was built by one of the Chinese emperors to keep out the Tartars; but it failed to

THE GREAT WALL OF CHINA.

accomplish the end for which it was built, since at the present time the Emperor of China is a Tartar.

Not only is China so extensive and grand a country, but it is the most ancient empire now in existence. In the far-off ages of the past, when Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt, the Chinese were a strong nation, with laws and a literature of their own. Some ten years after the child Samuel heard the voice of God speaking to him in the still midnight hours, a Chinese emperor named Wun Wang was writing a book, which is one of the standards of education in China to-day, and is committed to memory by all the advanced students in the empire. And when our own predecessors were only painted savages, wandering about the forests of Britain, the Chinese were enjoying a high degree of prosperity and civilization.

I will not, however, in the meantime, stay to write more of the country which they inhabit, but at once introduce to you some of the children of the land; for when you become acquainted with the training and manner of life of the young people of a country, you gain a pretty good idea of the kind of men and women they will become by and by.

Let us commence with the very beginning of life, and, going into one of these Chinese houses, have a peep at the baby, lying in his bamboo cradle, with its heavy framework and rockers, while his bright black eyes peer up at you curiously out of his small sallow face.

If it is summer-time, baby is not troubled with much clothing, a single airy garment being considered quite sufficient. During the cold days of winter, there being no fires lighted for warming Chinese houses, baby is muffled in so many tiny wadded garments that he looks like the queerest little ball imaginable.

His clothes are not white, like an English child's, but of some bright colour, usually scarlet. Round his fat little wrists you will notice a red cord has been tied. This is considered by his parents a very important matter, and serious consequences are dreaded if it should be neglected. When a child is disobedient and difficult to manage, a common remark is, 'Surely his parents forgot to bind his wrists,' for this mysterious operation is practised with the idea of making the little fellow docile and obedient in future life. Round the baby's neck you will see another piece of red cord has been tied, and suspended from it are quite a number of small objects which are supposed to act as charms, preserving the little one from the attacks of evil spirits, and guarding him against numerous childish complaints. Here are a number of small copper coins with a hole through the centre. They are the only currency of China. After being nicely rubbed up, they are hung round baby's neck, and are supposed to insure his freedom from attacks of colic and other ailments of infancy. Some of the charms are in the form of fabulous animals; occasionally they are made of silver. But whatever the shape or material, they are a great source of satisfaction to the baby, who bites and jingles them with all the delight of an English child playing with its coral and bells. On the day that baby is a fortnight old special thanksgiving is made, and offerings are laid before the family shrine of the goddess called 'Mother.'

But the most important event in the early days of a Chinese baby is the occasion on which his first month of life is celebrated. If baby is a boy, and particularly a first-born son, all the relatives and connections from far and near are invited to come to a grand feast in honour of the happy day. No one is expected to arrive empty-handed; and baby's riches in the way

of silver rings, charms, and lucky cash, not to mention painted ducks'-eggs, and piles of sweetmeats and cakes, have accumulated considerably before the day is over. The great event of the day is the shaving of the child's head. Chinese nurses are

SHAVING THE BABY'S HEAD IN CHINA.

amazed to find that English boys and girls, whose mothers neglect this important duty, can still boast of flowing locks when the years of childhood are past. The baby's head is shaved before the ancestral tablets, or the shrine of 'Mother,'

and the barber who performs the delicate operation, though he makes no charge, finds it the most profitable part of his business, since a money present is willingly given.

The baby's grandmother has an important part to play on this occasion: she is the principal guest of the day, and if she belongs to the wealthier classes, the presents she sends are generally numerous and costly. The most important of these is a gay little cap, ornamented with embroidery, and eighteen gold, silver, or copper figures of the disciples of Buddha, which are believed to attract all good influences towards their little wearer.

On the same day, baby receives his 'Milk' or pet name: but this does not of course serve him all his life through, for when he is old enough to go to school, the master selects a name for him; and later on, when he is married, or if he is fortunate enough to succeed in the competitive examinations, he will probably receive yet a third name.

These Milk names are sometimes very extraordinary to English ears; for the parents are afraid to give their children the fine high-sounding names their love suggests, lest the evil spirits, of whom they stand in constant fear, should come to understand how precious they are, and cause some calamity to overtake them.

And so you constantly meet with children answering to the names of Little Stupid, Vagabond, Flea, Dirt, or Spring Dog —the idea being that when the spirits hear the little ones called by such uncomplimentary names, they will imagine that the parents care very little for them, and will not take the trouble to molest them.

This foreboding that disaster may befall a child, particularly an only son, is the reason why many little boys wear the dress

of a Buddhist priest, and have their heads kept shaved till they are eight or nine years of age. By that time, if they are strong and well, they are dressed like other boys; the period of anxiety is supposed to have passed, and the parents imagine they have successfully deceived the spirits, by the ruse of making it appear they cared so little for their son that they were willing to make him a Buddhist priest.

And now, at the very beginning of the baby's life, you will find how widely the customs of China differ from those of our own land. In England, whether the baby is a boy or a girl, it is welcomed and loved by its parents; and in a family the little girls are considered as precious as their brothers. But in China it is quite different.

When the news of a baby's birth is sent to the relatives and friends, the sex of the child is the most important part of the announcement. If it is a boy, rejoicings are general, and all the friends call upon the family with presents and congratulations. But if the baby is a girl, the parents are considered to be more in need of sympathy than congratulation, and the kindest remark any soft-hearted visitor can possibly be expected to make is, 'Ah, well, even girls are of some use!'

Not unfrequently when a little girl is born, its parents will drown it rather than have the trouble of bringing it up. Some women have destroyed as many as five or six little girls in this way. To save the babies from being put to death, kind-hearted Chinamen have established Foundling Hospitals in many Chinese cities. The tiny baby-girls are taken in there when cast off by their fathers and mothers, and are given out in great numbers to country-women to nurse. It is a strange sight, once a month, to see these little foundlings being brought in from their country homes with their foster-mothers, and taken to

A BABY TOWER.

the Foundling Hospital for inspection. Some come in small round baskets slung from the end of a long pole, carried on a man's shoulders. If the babies are plump and well, the nurses receive their pay, but if they look thin or ailing, a considerable reduction is made in their wages. Many other Foundling Hospitals have been established by the Roman Catholics; and it is not unusual for the wife of a Protestant missionary to hear the low wail of a new-born baby-girl, which has been left upon the doorstep of the Mission House by parents who, though not willing to take the baby's life, were very anxious to get rid of it. Sometimes a man is employed to go round with a number of children, and try to dispose of them for money. One of our missionary friends in the Fuh-kien province was offered the chance of purchasing three little wailing babies, hungry and cold, after being carried with several others round for sale through a long day. If she would take the lot, the baby merchant said she should have them cheap.

If a Chinese baby dies, no loving hands prepare it for its grave. A piece of coarse matting is tied around the tiny body, and it is carried to a little tower erected outside most cities, with little openings like windows, but without doors. All that is left of the baby is thrown in through one of these openings, and falls into the pit below the tower. If the little one is a girl, the parents are not always particular to ascertain if it is quite dead or not. The very fact of a baby's death convinces the parents that the little one was no precious gift to be treasured, but possessed by some evil spirit, and only a source of anxiety and misfortune from the first, and the sooner they forget all about it the better.

The baby-girl's head is shaved, but with few of the rejoicings that attend the same event in her brother's life; and she very

frequently receives some such name as Chien-ti, 'Lead along a brother;' Lai-ti, 'Come younger brother'—with the idea of expressing the hope that she may soon be succeeded by a baby-boy. Sometimes, if she is the second or third child in a family, she is called simply, Daughter number one, or two, as the case may be. Occasionally some more poetical designation is chosen, such as Pearl, Fragrance, or Peace; or the name of a flower is selected, as Narcissus, Lily, or Rose.

After the shaving festival, baby is carried out to pay its first visit to its grandmother. On this occasion she presents the child with a number of small gifts, each of which has some good signification. Several kinds of vegetables which attain to maturity very rapidly are offered, as expressing the old lady's desire that baby may likewise quickly grow strong and sturdy; and rice husks, which signify that it is her wish that her small grandson should grow up a proficient scholar and a famous man. When the baby reaches the age of four months he is taught to sit in a chair, and so relieve his mother or attendant of the care of nursing him. Soft sugar-candy is placed on the little chair, and it is thought that henceforth baby will be very fond of sitting in it.

When the child goes out of doors he is frequently strapped upon the back of his attendant; the women of the poorer classes, while carrying their children in that position, manage to attend to most of their domestic duties.

A solemn, patient little being is the Chinese baby in general, putting up with indignities which an English child would violently resent. But he can laugh with the merriest when his mother holds him up to her face, not to kiss, but to smell the soft brown cheek. He likes to hear the strangely unmusical voice, in which she drones out the high notes of the 'Mo li wha,' or some other

popular tune, and claps his small hands together gleefully to the nursery rhyme of—

One, strike the hand;
Two, let us play;
Three, draw the bow.

The day that is kept with greater rejoicings than any other in the baby's life is the anniversary of his birth. A great feast is spread, to which even the most distant relatives are invited, and every dainty known to the cuisine of China decks the festal board.

HOW BABIES ARE CARRIED IN CHINA.

Presents, as usual, come pouring in on all sides; but the most suitable offering is supposed to be a pair of embroidered shoes, since baby will soon be thinking of walking alone. Very gay indeed are the slippers, which have been worked by the skilful fingers of all the female relatives. Some are embroidered with the head of a cat, thereby expressing a hope that baby may become as sure-footed as pussy has the character of being. Some are decorated with the head of a frog, others have pretty floral designs, and yet another will bear the mystic symbol whose signification is, 'May all you wish be yours.'

After the feast, a very important ceremony is performed. The little scarlet-coated hero of the day is placed in the middle of a table which usually stands just in front of the ancestral tablets. Around the little man are ranged a great variety of articles, such as a mandarin's button and necklace, books, ink-slab and pencil, a string of cash, artificial flowers, and other things

A CHINESE TEMPLE.

significant of various professions and trades. The question of the day is, Which object will attract the baby's attention, and, being grasped by his tiny hand, indicate his future career in life? The baby's grandmother is usually exceedingly careful to have the articles of best omen nearest to the child's hand. But if the baby chances to do his duty and grasp the glittering button and

beads, the excitement is intense, and congratulatory phrases are heard on every side.

Very numerous are the thanksgivings and propitiatory services performed at some idol-temple, or before the family shrine, during the first two years of the baby's life. All of them are attended with burning of incense and paper-money, letting off of crackers to frighten away evil spirits, and din of gongs and cymbals. But I will not stay to describe these further. We have seen the baby safely through the first year of his life, and will go on to speak of his friends and home, of the sights he sees around him, and the strange sounds his little lips soon learn to form.

CHAPTER II

HIS HOME AND FRIENDS

When first the bright black eyes of the Chinese baby begin to gaze with some intelligence upon the strange new world in which it has come to live, the sights it sees are, for the most part, very different from those which attract the notice of an English child.

The first object of deepest interest with our baby Chinaman, as with his English brother, is always the face of his mother. And how unlike she is to an English mother! She has dark eyes, like the baby's, and raven locks, which are drawn tightly back from her face, and used to cover a queer framework, looking like butterflies' wings, or some other fantastic shape. Her forehead appears very broad, since, just before her wedding-day, all the short hairs over her brow were drawn out to give it this wide, open appearance.

Several of her finger-nails are very long, for that is a sign that she is a lady, and has little work to do with her hands. To keep these nails from breaking, she wears over them little shields of gold or silver. But look at her feet! Could any one ever imagine that they were the feet of a grown-up woman? They have been bound and compressed with strong cotton bandages from her childhood, and now she can wear tiny slippers only three inches long, made of bright-coloured satin, and very beautifully embroidered. Every one admires her

CHINESE FAMILY, SHOWING NAIL SHIELDS.

very much, and says that when she moves it is as the 'waving of the willow trees,' and they call her poor distorted feet 'golden lilies.' As we look at her our wonder is how she can manage to walk at all without coming to grief.

THE BABY'S MOTHER.

Her dress also looks strange to European eyes. She wears a loose tunic of some bright-flowered silk, trimmed with braid which is woven with silk and gold thread. Her sleeves are more than a yard round, and adorned with strips of beautiful embroidery. She wears loose trousers underneath the tunic, and when in full dress a kilted skirt, which is also richly trimmed. She can boast of a large stock of jewellery, and she wears many

pins of elaborate workmanship in her dark locks. Her ears are quite weighed down by her large heavy earrings, and she has several rings upon her fingers, and massive bracelets on her arms.

When relatives and friends are invited to dine at their house, the baby's mother never sits down to a meal with them. She remains always in her own apartment; but sometimes, when there is a merry company in the guest hall, you may hear a rustling and a sound of hushed laughter, and so be made aware of the fact that the lady of the house and her attendants are having a sly peep at what is going on; or it is easy to make small holes in paper screens, or to peer from behind a curtain which shields the door.

The baby's mother is quite unable to read or write, and very wearily the days pass with her. It takes a long time for her attendant to dress her hair, and fix it in its place with long pins and a sort of glue. Then she adorns it with bright-coloured, sweet-scented flowers. Her face also has to be powdered, and a touch of rouge put on here and there.

By and by she will spend a little time at her embroidery frame, or play with baby till she gets tired even of that amusement. Afterwards she takes a turn at smoking or card-playing, and so the weary hours of the day slip by.

It is quite a relief when every few days she has a call from one of the ancient dames who make their living by flower-selling, fortune-telling, or vending numerous small wares. Others come also who are employed as marriage makers, and go from one family to another trying to earn a living by arranging matches between babies or little children. But, whatever their profession, they are always very welcome visitors, since, with their lively gossip, and news of the families of their various

THE BABY'S FATHER.

clients, they bring a fresh breeze from the outer world into the close, stifling atmosphere of the 'inner apartments.'

As I have said, the baby's mother rarely goes outside the door of her own house; but, on one or two occasions during the year, she is allowed to venture out in a sedan-chair, with curtains closely drawn, carried on the shoulders of several coolies.

Once, in the early spring-time, she pays a visit to the family graves. She journeys outside the city walls, beyond the great plain dotted with countless numbers of mounds, marked by no tree or flower, but interspersed here and there by heavy coffins bound round by coarse strips of matting. Just on the borders of this city of the dead, which her sad heathen faith brightens with no ray of hope and peace, are the graves of the baby's forefathers for many generations. No better spot could possibly have been chosen, according to the geomancers who have been consulted about the matter, for behind it rises a green hill, sheltering the bones of the dead from chill northern blasts, while the warm southern sun shines in front upon the strangely-shaped granite slabs. With her own hands she has prepared the dishes of various kinds of food for an offering to the dead, but she stands aside while the male portion of the family entreat the spirits to come and partake of the feast provided for them, worshipping them meanwhile in reverential attitudes with smoke of burning incense and paper-money.

At other times, especially if her baby is ill, she pays a visit to some noted temple, and there vows before the shrine of the Goddess of Mercy, or the idol called 'Mother,' that if they will but protect her darling and restore him to health again, costly offerings shall be laid at their feet.

As for the baby's father, his hair also is shaved off his forehead, and he wears the rest of it twisted into a heavy plait,

which hangs down his back. To make it look long and thick, the barber often adds some false hair to it, or some threads of black silk. He wears a long robe of coloured silk, and in winter a sleeveless wadded vest of satin. In very cold weather he dresses in fur-lined robes. On ordinary occasions his head is covered with a skull-cap of black silk, except when the weather

A CHINESE BARBER.

is warm, and then he wears no covering at all. His official hat is made of felt, turned up all round and trimmed with dark fur. The button or glass ball which tells the rank to which he has attained is fastened on the top of it. These balls are of various colours, and indicate the exact rank of the wearer. The highest is of red coral; others are light red, light blue, dark blue,

mother-of-pearl, and the lowest of all is a gilt ball. His shoes are made of satin, and have thick white soles, instead of being bright with blacking.

Baby's father is probably a scholar, and yet if you began to question him you would be inclined to consider him rather ignorant. He can quote whole chapters of the Chinese classics, and tell you in a moment the exact place in which any passage occurs, at the same time giving you some interpretation of it. But if you put him through the simplest examination in geography, you would find that the only clear idea he had upon the subject was that China was the largest and most important empire under the sun, and that whatever other small countries there might be beside were all tributary to it, and inhabited by 'outer barbarians.' He is always congratulating himself upon being born in the grand Celestial Empire, and feels convinced that the people of all other nations must be envious of his birthright.

As for the religion of the baby's father, he has little faith in the worship of idols, but he never fails to burn paper-money and incense before the carved wooden tablets in which he believes the spirits of his ancestors are dwelling. Not only does he love his baby-boy with the strong affection of a father, but all his hopes for future happiness are resting on that little life.

If so terrible a misfortune as his baby-son's death should overtake him, he believes when his turn comes to enter the unseen world his untended spirit will wander about those mysterious regions hungry and naked, homeless and miserable; for only a living son, by constant acts of devotion before the ancestral tablet and at the family graves, can supply the wants of a father in the spirit-land.

No wonder, then, that when the baby-boy was ailing, the

proud father condescended to go begging from door to door in the city, asking each family, to the number of one hundred, for a single cash, a coin of which it takes twenty to make a penny. His idea was that the prayers and good wishes of each of these families would follow their money, and thus secure the health and prosperity of his child; and he purchased with the coins he collected a 'hundred families lock,' which is always worn round his little son's neck. No wonder, also, that when the baby was seriously ill, he walked through the city streets, carrying the child's small garments at the end of a bamboo pole, and crying out at intervals, 'Return, return,' for he believed that some evil spirit had tempted the little one's soul away and caused its sickness. How true it is that, in China, the life and future happiness of the parents are all bound up in the life of their child!

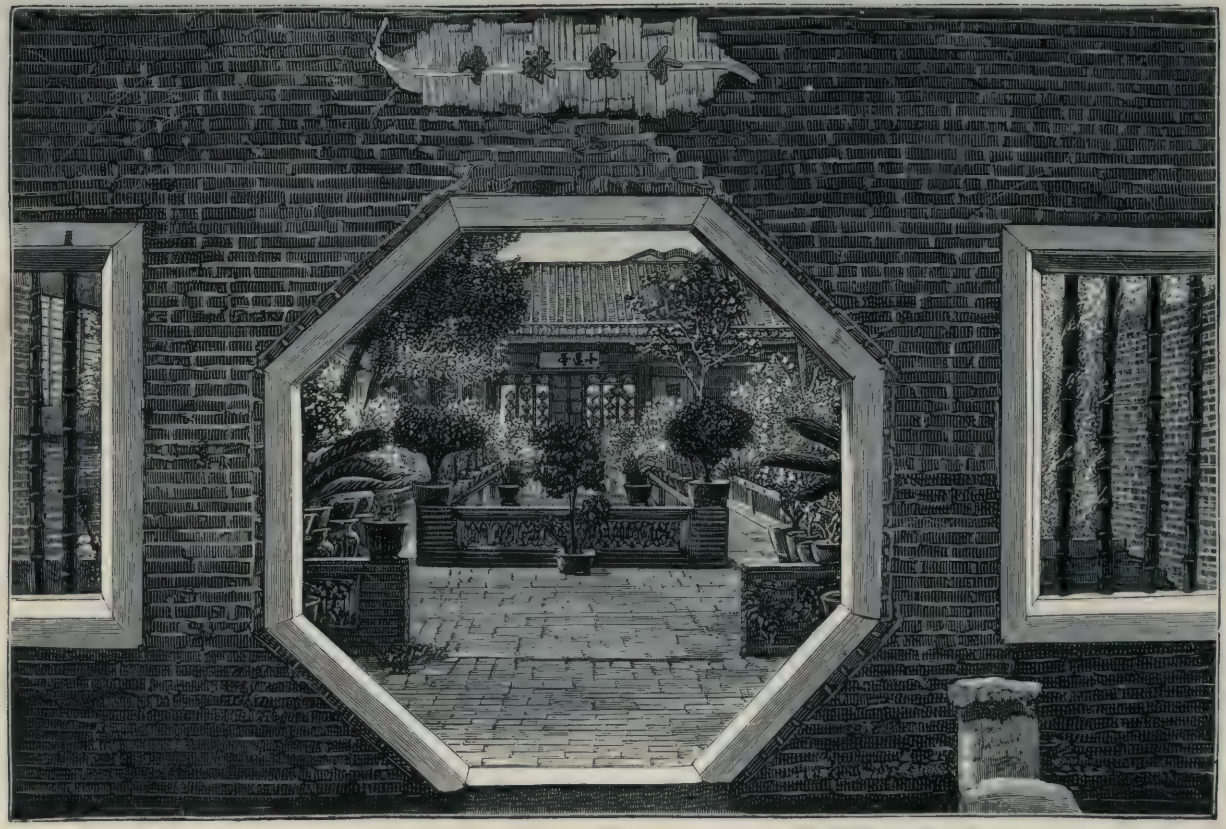
How different is the house in which the baby lives from the homes we love in dear old England! It is of one storey only, and the rooms are ranged one behind each other, with an open court between, called a t'ien ching, or 'heavenly well,' which is very prettily decorated. In the centre you will see some curious rockwork, and over or among it strange-looking dwarf plants and shrubs are growing. Here is a fir tree no taller than a geranium, stunted and bound with fine wire, till it looks the queerest little dwarf imaginable. Close by the rockwork you will see little tanks in which gold and silver fish are kept, and others in which the broad leaves of the lotus, with its delicate pink flowers, are growing. All around the court are pretty earthenware stands upon which pots of flowers are placed. Here are beautiful dwarf orange trees, the golden fruit gleaming out from among the dark, glossy leaves and fragrant buds. There are also stately oleanders and brilliant pomegranate buds,

and many more besides. In some quiet corner, wisteria, jessamine, and climbing Chinese roses grow luxuriantly; and in the autumn, the sweet scent of the 'Kwei-wha,' or flower of the fragrant olive, is borne on every breeze.

We have stopped in our description of the house to talk about the garden, which would be quite out of place if it were in England; but in China, as I said before, it is different, for houses there are often built round the garden, instead of the garden going round the house.

Passing on into the principal room of the mansion, which is called the 'guest hall,' we find it furnished with a large oblong daïs or couch, with a low stand in the centre. It is placed near to the wall of the apartment, just opposite the door. Large illuminated scrolls are suspended on the wall in pairs, having selected passages from the Chinese classics written upon them. If there is no hall set apart for the ancestral tablets, they are usually found in this room. On either side we see elaborately carved chairs, placed in pairs opposite to each other, with a tea-stand between each. All Chinese rooms are furnished in exactly the same fashion, and when a visitor enters the house he knows exactly in what light you regard him by the worth of the seat you press him to take. The seat of honour is on the left hand of the host.

There is no fire-place in the apartment, for the Chinese have no stoves for heating rooms, though in the northern parts of the empire a broad hollow bench of brick is erected and heated by flues. Being without glass windows, even on a bright day the room is dull; but when the handsome lanterns which are suspended from the ceiling are lighted up, it has a pretty effect. A side door, often screened by a curtain, leads into the apartments of the women, which are always situated at the back of



CHINESE COURTYARD AND GARDEN.

the house. Chinese doors and windows rarely fit very closely, and the only arrangement the people have for keeping themselves warm is to heap on jacket after jacket, and vest after vest, till they seem almost smothered with clothing. The poor people pad their jackets with cotton-wool, and those who can afford it wear fur-lined garments. They warm their hands and feet with small hand and foot stoves, which look like little brass baskets with grated covers, filled with charcoal embers. The 'sou-lou,' or hand stove, is very small and light, and is frequently pushed up the large Chinese sleeves.

Going into the sleeping-rooms, we find bedsteads not unlike our own. There are, however, no blankets or sheets, and a large wadded coverlet, gay with bright chintz, forms both mattress and covering. We see no soft feather pillows, but in summer-time only a hard frame of bamboo, which keeps the head cool. In winter a different pillow is used, embroidered at the ends and covered with cloth : this also is very stiff and hard.

When we come to the commissariat of China, we shall find that even the food is very different from our own. When a Chinaman meets you he does not ask after your health, but his polite greeting is, 'Have you taken your rice?'—and rice is the universal 'staff of life' in South and Central China.

In the baby's home, knives and forks are never seen upon the table, but only two sticks, about a foot long, made either of ivory or varnished wood. Chop-sticks is the name given to these useful little articles by foreigners, but the Chinese themselves call them kwai-tsz, or 'quick lads.'

At meal-time each person has his own special basin of rice, which he holds up very near to his mouth ; then taking the chop-sticks in his right hand, he manages to empty his basin

and be ready for another in a very short space of time. Vegetables, fish, and meat are also cooked and placed in separate basins in the centre of the table, and when any one wishes for a relish to his rice, he dips his chop-sticks into the common dish and secures a morsel. The Chinese think our English fashion

SITTING-ROOM OF A WELL-TO-DO CHINAMAN.

of serving large joints of meat on the table quite unworthy of a civilized nation. They say they leave the work of carving and preparing the food to their servants, but we keep our guests waiting while we do it ourselves at table.

A Chinese feast frequently lasts for many hours. The table is usually bare, no cloth of any kind being spread upon it.

Dessert, consisting generally of dried fruits, nuts, etc., is placed first upon the festive board. One plate is considered sufficient for each guest, however large the number of courses may be, and sometimes there are as many as twenty-five different dishes. Birds'-nest soup, sea-slugs, or *bêche de mer*, sharks' fins, and ducks' tongues are some of the peculiar dishes which appear at a Chinese feast. Nearly everything is stewed, and flavoured with garlic or oil, which makes these dainties not very agreeable to a European palate. Frequently, when foreign guests have been invited, the cook is ordered to flavour the dishes sparingly, in order to suit the strange Western taste. Wine is served hot in China, and poured from zinc or silver kettles into the daintiest of small porcelain wine-cups. Tea is always kept in the house ready for drinking, and when a visitor calls, a servant immediately brings in a cup of the national beverage, which is served without sugar or milk.

CHAPTER III

THE SIGHTS HE SEES

When for the first time a Chinese child goes out of doors, and is carried in the arms, or sits with his legs round the neck of his attendant, it is a very busy world he enters, and a strange one also to Western eyes. As he passes along the streets in most parts of China, he finds even the widest and busiest in the city are narrower than our English lanes ; they have no side walks, and are paved with irregular stone slabs, for it is considered unlucky to have them laid down evenly. There are no open spaces or squares in the midst of a Chinese city, but all the houses are packed together in the smallest possible space. Being built largely of wood, the frequent fires constantly destroy whole streets at a time. But the householders begin to build again among the smoking ashes, setting up stalls close by the ruins, and attempting to carry on their business as best they can under the circumstances.

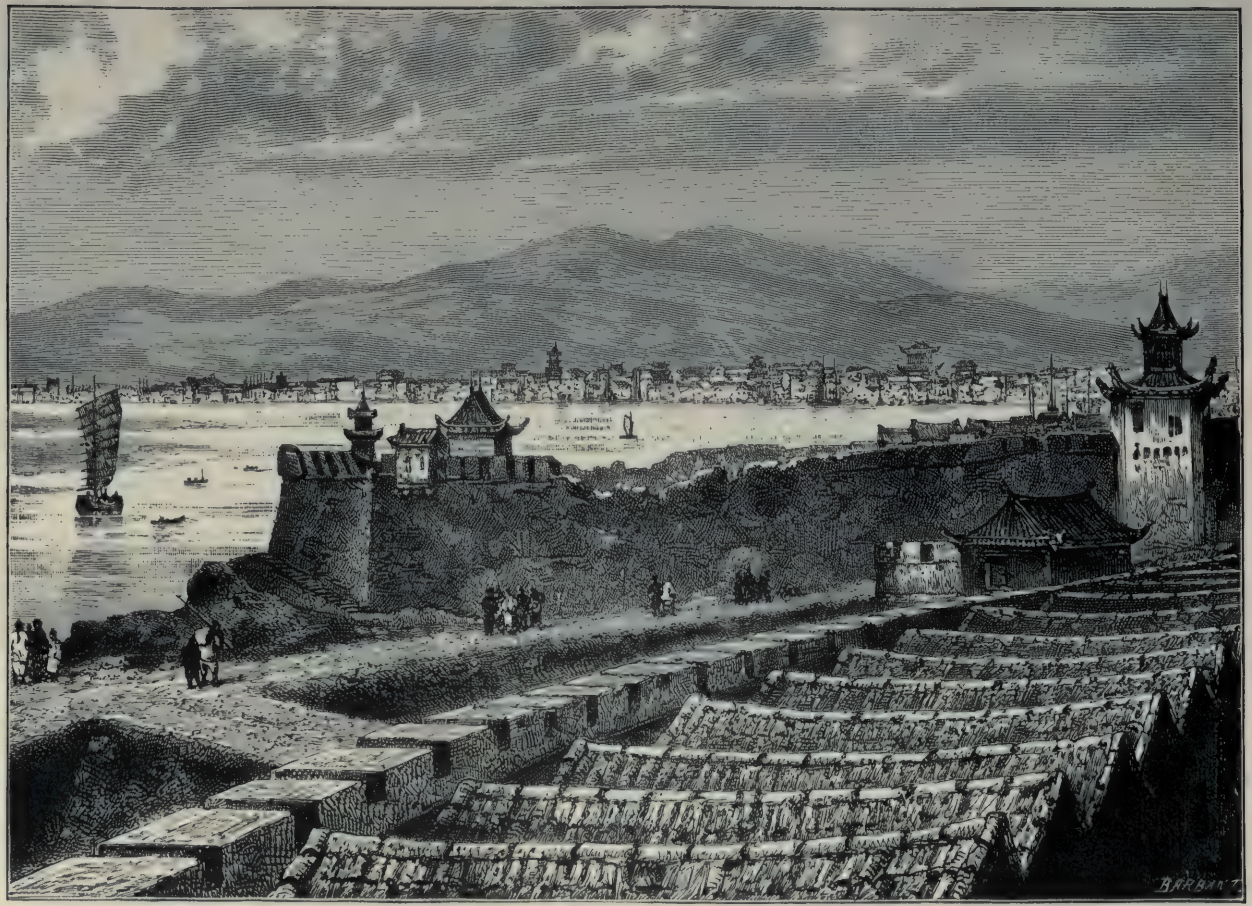
Most Chinese cities are surrounded by strong walls, with gates which are well defended ; frequently they are closed at sunset, and no exit or entrance is permitted till daylight. A small guard of soldiers is often posted at the gates for their defence. Chinese soldiers are strangely destitute of that air of briskness and general vigour which is so characteristic of our military men. Their uniform is usually of blue cotton, loose in

shape, and occasionally they have a jacket or vest of scarlet. This garment is adorned with a white disc, bearing characters which describe the regiment to which they belong.

Turning back from the gate into the street, we shall find it damp with the drippings from the water-buckets which the coolies have been carrying from the river since early morning. A pretty vista of bright colouring meets our eyes, formed by the sign-boards, which are not placed over the doors only, as in England, but hang down perpendicularly from the projecting eaves. Many of them are eight or ten feet long, and are nicely varnished and inscribed with some high-flown epithet, which has been chosen by the owner instead of his name. And so we meet with a furrier's shop bearing the title 'Virtuous and Abundant,' and a cloth store called 'Celestial Advantage.' An undertaker has chosen the title of 'United and Prosperous,' and a coal merchant calls his premises by the high-sounding name of 'Heavenly Adornment.' In summer-time the streets are shaded with matting, to protect the passers-by from the fierce rays of the sun.

No carts or carriages are seen in Chinese streets, and only an occasional horseman, riding in some mandarin's procession. Sedan-chairs are in constant use, varying in size and appearance from the official's roomy and elaborately decked conveyance to the fragile bamboo erections which are found at corners of the thoroughfares waiting to be hired, as hansoms stand on the streets of English cities. It seems wonderful that room can be found for the chairs readily to pass and repass in a Chinese street, but the coolies press on through the thronging crowds, shouting at the top of their voices, 'Look out for your backs! Look out for your backs!'

Here are some coolies carrying baskets of rice to the public



CHINESE CITY WALLS.

granaries, while others are heavily laden with buckets, full of water from the river or lake. Step by step as they plod along they drone out their monotonous carrying song, 'Hay ho! High ho!'

Here is a man with his baskets filled with the glossy brown pods which are used as soap by the natives. Yonder comes a lantern-seller, with fifty or more skeletons of lanterns at each end of his long pole; it is wonderful to see the dexterity with which he avoids mishaps, and manages with his cumbersome burden to make his way through the crowded streets. Now we are thrust to the side of the road by an immense water-buffalo, upon whose unwieldy form his keeper, in the shape of a small boy, is mounted. Immediately after we meet a pig in a large cylindrical bamboo basket, slung on a long pole and carried by two bearers. The Chinese consider it more expeditious to carry piggy to market than to attempt to drive him through their narrow streets. Close upon the heels of the pig and his bearers comes the procession of some high mandarin. The great man sits at ease in his richly-decorated sedan-chair, preceded by a very shabby-looking retinue. He wears handsome robes of satin, and an expression of impassive superiority rests upon his solemn countenance. At the head of the great man's procession appear one or two couples of lictors, armed with whips and wearing tall, conical-shaped felt hats. Behind them comes a string of small boys, frequently the Arabs of the streets; they carry large painted boards upon which the characters 'Stand aside,' and 'Let there be respectful silence,' appear. Last of all comes the characteristic umbrella or many-flounced scarlet canopy, which is held aloft above the great man's head whenever he alights from his sedan.

Notwithstanding the narrowness of Chinese streets, the space

JINRICKSHAW AND SEDANS.

is still further restricted by the erection before the open shop fronts of numerous small stalls. Here is the establishment of a travelling tinker; by his side is the stand of a wandering physician. Opposite to them we see sitting at a small table the money-changer, with his strings of cash, his scales, and broken pieces of silver. By his side sits the spectacle-mender, the migratory barber, and the travelling cook.

A TRAVELLING KITCHEN.

Let us stop for a moment at this itinerant cookshop, and take a look at some of the viands which are pressed upon us. We are not likely to find the puppies, snails, and kittens of which we have perhaps heard, but here are sausage balls flavoured with garlic, minced beef mixed with appetizing celery, delicate slices of fried fish, dumplings of fat pork flavoured with sugar, and griddle cakes fried a beautiful gold colour. No

A STREET BARBER.

wonder that with such a display of delicacies these stalls are liberally patronized, and constantly surrounded by a group of men taking their meal in this expeditious fashion.

Passing by the barber, who drives a brisk trade, since most Chinamen have their heads shaved every few days, we will spend a few minutes at the stall of the well-patronized fortune-teller. They profess to be able to predict the future in various ways, by dissection of the written character, by tortoises, and by birds.

A young man approaches with an anxious look upon his countenance, and informs the diviner that he purposes leaving home for a season, and would like to know if his journey will be prosperous or not. 'Going from home,' says the fortune-teller, as he calls from his cage the wisest and most old-fashioned of birds, tempting him out with a grain of rice. Then he shuffles a pack of cards containing answers to imaginary questions, and birdie is directed to pick one out. He does so, and the fortune-teller reads the answer to the effect that 'The journey will not be prosperous. You will lose money by it. Stay at home for a little while till a more favourable opportunity.'

But what is this string of blind men following in single file, holding by each other's garments? They are the blind beggars going on their rounds. They go from shop to shop, each tradesman giving them a small sum, except in cases where the householders pay them an annual subscription, and are thus relieved of their calls altogether.

Here are some more beggars, for they are a numerous class in China. They sit on the bare earth, and sometimes have a heart-rending account of their difficulties written on the pavement before them or painted on a board. They seem to be in very distressing circumstances, and as they entreat the 'honourable

passer-by' to spare them a single cash, they knock their foreheads violently against the hard stones of the footpath. Frequently we observe that they have exercised considerable forethought, since their heads are protected by a thick leather pad upon which the force of their violent 'ko-tows' or head-knockings expends itself.

Here comes a beggar of another kind; it is a mendicant priest. He wears a loose yellow robe, his head is completely shaved, and no queue of braided hair hangs down his back. Around his waist is fastened a wooden drum, which he taps as he walks along. This curious instrument is used in the temples as an accompaniment to the prayers of the priests; the sound it emits when struck is peculiarly dull and hollow. These mendicant priests are usually chosen from among the rest on account of their superior sanctity. They carry a small wallet strapped upon the back, to receive the contributions of the faithful, who are taught that he who helps a priest contributes to his own advancement in the future world.

Many of the shop fronts are gay with flowers, which are planted in elegant flower-pots brought from the far-famed potteries of Chin-teh-tsin, on the Poyang Lake. The Chinese are fond of flowers, and the florist drives a good trade. See him as he approaches with his shallow bamboo baskets, filled with fine plants which it has been his aim through careful cultivation to induce to bear blossoms of the largest size possible. In the early spring he has the fragrant flowers of the la-mei and the delicate pink blossoms of the almond. Later on there are brilliant azaleas, roses, pinks, and peonies, pomegranates and water-lilies; and with the cool breezes of early autumn come the gorgeous coxcombs of stately height with gigantic flowers. The delicate, many-tinted chrysanthemums are the pride of Chinese

gardeners, with the beautiful blossoms of the passion-flower and the aster. Then the faint, sweet scent of the kwei-wha, or fragrant olive, is wafted on every breeze, and Nature's incense seems for a time almost to overpower the vile odours which rise from the crowded streets of every Chinese city.

Our friend the florist is usually paid a certain annual sum by wealthy householders, and engages in return to keep their courtyards and gardens gay with flowers the whole year round, finding even in the dull winter days 'things of beauty,' in the shape of the fragrant narcissus and the delicate camellia, to adorn these Chinese homes.

I have said there are no squares in most Chinese cities, the nearest approach to them being the open spaces sometimes seen in front of temples, or the courtyards of yamens, or magistrates' offices. The latter are frequently adorned with extraordinary stone figures of animals which the Chinese call lions. They are objects of awe to all Chinese children, who hear weird stories of how the lions are only stone lions in the day-time, but at night they come to life and wander through the streets of the city.

We have been wandering from time to time through the busy thoroughfares of a Chinese town, and now let us enter one of the shops, and try to do a little business with the comfortable-looking tradesman who sits at his ease at the other side of the counter, and is probably very leisurely smoking his pipe. We will suppose that we have entered a store stocked with the far-famed earthenware of the Celestial Empire. Here are magnificent vases, five feet high, adorned with groups of figures painted in delicate colours ; close by are barrel-shaped stands for flower-pots gaily ornamented, and all kinds of household utensils. Here are wine-pots, delicate teacups, and a large number of

ENTRANCE TO A YAMEN.

articles which have been produced to supply the demand from foreign countries, such as tea sets of English fashion, with handles to the cups and saucers; little teapots, which are rarely used by the natives; and fanciful ornaments of all shapes and sizes. The shopkeeper finds us the article for which we are seeking, and calmly asks us about twice the sum which we know it to be worth. We promptly reply that it is far too dear, and he slightly reduces the price. This sort of bargaining continues for a considerable time, and ends by our eventually paying him half the price he first asked us—to his intense satisfaction, since he has profited considerably by his dealings with the outer barbarian, who has doubtless given him a far larger sum for his wares than he would receive from one of his own countrymen. Before we leave—indeed in the midst of our bargaining—a cup of tea has been presented to us, and a pipe pressed upon our notice.

But what is the business of the man who is approaching us, carrying two large deep bamboo baskets, with a tiny flag attached to one of them bearing the legend, 'Respect printed paper'? As he proceeds, a door here and there opens, and a man-servant comes out with a waste basket, emptying its contents into the large basket carried by the collector of scraps. This man is employed by some Chinese benevolent society to go round and collect even the smallest pieces of printed paper, so that they may be carried to some temple courtyard and destroyed by fire in a furnace set apart for the purpose, for the kitchen stove would be considered too secular a place for performing such a sacred duty. This is one of the works of merit which the Chinese believe accumulate for them a sort of balance, to be set against the sins they have committed when they are judged by the king of the infernal regions at the end of life.

AN ITINERANT CAKE-SELLER.

Probably few things have contributed so much to the idea that foreigners are uncivilized barbarians as our light regard for our own printed or written paper. They see us using it in all sorts of ignominious ways. We wrap up parcels in it, and frequently carelessly tread it underfoot; consequently the Chinese naturally conclude that we can have nothing worthy of the name of a language or literature, or we should not treat the printed page in so disrespectful a manner.

Now we are passing a fine tea-shop, the great rendezvous of all Chinamen. There they sit in large numbers, discussing the topics of the day, while the national beverage is freely imbibed. Melon-seeds and pea-nuts are also provided at these establishments, and are taken with the tea. A Chinaman will pass the greater part of a day in one of these places of public resort, spending probably only a penny.

Before we leave these crowded streets, let us look at some of the names which they bear. Many of them are very high-sounding, and this is most frequently the case when the locality is low and of bad repute. First we have the street of Perpetual Comfort, and near by is the Lane of Filial Piety, and the Court of Eternal Harmony. Then there is the lane of the Chia Family, New Street, Horse-tail Lane, Thread and Needle Alley, and the Street of Heavenly Treasures.

As we leave the city we pass through two heavy stone gateways; outside them the heads of criminals are frequently suspended in small bamboo cages—a ghastly sight which seems to be little heeded by the passers-by, although they are placed there to awaken terror in the hearts of evil-doers.

Beneath the gateways we shall see various notices and advertisements pasted up. Announcements of approaching religious festivals, or the ordination services of some Buddhist

priests, are there. Advertisements to push the sale of kerosene oil, anti-opium pills, and other quack medicines, and notices of rewards offered for the discovery of persons who are missing from their homes.

So, with much that is totally different, we find many points of similarity between the customs and sights of this ancient empire and our own English towns, and most probably return from our wanderings with the reflection that human nature is pretty much the same the whole world over.

CHAPTER IV

CHINESE BOYS AT SCHOOL

When a Chinese boy reaches his sixth birthday, it is considered quite time he should be sent to school.

The occasion is looked upon as one of such importance that a fortune-teller is usually consulted, and on a lucky day, fixed upon by the wise man, the little Chinaman makes his first appearance at school. Let us follow him when, accompanied by his father, he makes his way to the school-house. He looks very fresh and tidy, his hair has been neatly shaved from his forehead, and the rest of it is plaited up into a long black queue, a pien-tsz he calls it, which hangs down behind. When any of his school-fellows want to torment him, they will no doubt tie his pigtail to the same appendage on another boy's head, which will be very uncomfortable for them both.

If it is summer-time, our young friend wears nothing upon his head, and is only clothed in a jacket or vest of loose cotton or grass-cloth, with small baggy trousers of the same material. But if the weather is cold, he will, no doubt, be wearing half-a-dozen vests and coats, one above another, and some of them will be padded with cotton-wool. The first thing that strikes you, as you look at him, is how very difficult he must find it to make any use of his arms. Upon his head he wears a small skull-cap of black or blue silk, with a little scarlet twist at the

A BOYS' SCHOOL.

top, and very likely a thick tassel of silken threads falling down behind. His shoes have very thick white soles, and very often the toes are embroidered by his proud mother with fanciful little designs of flowers or butterflies. Sometimes he wears in his girdle a little purse, which has also been embroidered by his mother, but it will not hold many of the copper coins with a hole through the centre, which we call 'cash.' If he is ever rich enough to have saved any number of these coins, he strings them on a wisp of straw or piece of string, making a firm knot at each end to keep them safe.

If he does not possess a purse, he is at no loss for a receptacle for his boyish treasures, since his sleeves are so large and long that they form a capital hiding-place. In China, little books are not called pocket editions, but sleeve editions; a man does not pocket anything, as in England, but he 'sleeves' it.

Having reached the school-house, our boy-friend enters, carrying in his hand some small present for the grave-looking elderly person who is to be his teacher, and his first act is to do reverence and burn incense before the tablet which has the name of the sage Confucius written upon it. The furniture of the room consists of a number of little desks or tables, with high stools behind them, which are frequently provided by the parents. Before the master stands a larger table, and upon it are lying not only books and papers, but the indispensable pipe. Upon each little desk you will see, not pens and ink such as we use in England, but inkstones, upon which the boys rub the cake of Indian, or rather Chinese ink, dipping it in a little water.

For his pen he has a brush, not unlike our large paint brushes of camel's hair. He holds it perpendicularly in his hand, pointing to the ceiling, as he traces on the thin soft paper the queer-looking characters on his copy slips.

English boys will doubtless consider Chinese lessons extremely dry and uninteresting, since several years have to be spent in learning to repeat the mere sounds and write the forms of the characters or picture-words, of the meaning of which they understand little more than a parrot.

There is no alphabet of the Chinese language, but two hundred and fourteen radicals or root words, which enter into the formation of all the other characters. The words are all of one syllable, and are written down one beneath the other in columns, instead of across the page, and the beginning of their books is the end of ours.

The language of China is so ancient that most people think it goes back to a time not long after the Deluge, and it is the oldest language now spoken in the world. The Chinese say that their written words or characters were originally hieroglyphics, or rough pictures of the objects of which they desired to speak.

To make my meaning clearer, I will write down a few of the pictures drawn by the ancient Chinese, and the names attached to them, and beneath these you will see the shapes of the characters as they are now written—

Hieroglyph :

Present character : 日 月 子 山 馬

Sun Moon Child Hill Horse

It was soon found quite impossible to express the requirements of a people in a language necessarily so limited as one made up of picture-signs alone. Gradually the scholars began to use more complicated symbols, and frequently a picture-word was used in combination with some other symbol to make the meaning plain—

And so the sun 日 above the horizon, 一 signified morning, and is now written thus 旦

A tree is 木; a couple of these were placed together, and now stand for forest 林

A mouth 口 in a door 門 conveys the idea of asking, thus 問

Not only is the Chinese language almost unique as regards the formation of its written characters, but the vast number of words which can be formed from the same radical or root is extraordinary. The number of words in the language amounts to over forty thousand, but only a very small proportion of these are known to any but the *literati* of the empire.

The difficulty of the spoken language arises from the various tones, the meaning of a word varying according to the intonation of the voice, and sometimes having as many as fifteen different significations.

To give an example of this, the word *che*, pronounced in exactly the same tone of voice, and without an aspirate, has eighteen different meanings. Among other things, it stands for our English nouns—famine, fowl, impediment, footprint, foundation, sieve, and small table, and is also used in expressing each and all of the following actions: to wind silk, to ridicule, to crowd, to draw water, to strike, and to investigate.

The same word, pronounced in exactly the same tone, but with an aspirate, has as many as ten different meanings. Among others, it stands for whispers, grief, cold, seven, wife; and for the verbs to insult, to roost, to varnish, and to deceive.

Many absurd blunders are constantly made by foreign students of the Chinese language; and we hear a man talking about his wives when he means to speak of his fowls; calling for a cake, and having a bottle brought to him; and making

CHINESE PEASANT LIFE—GOING TO MARKET.

allusion to his nose when he wishes to talk about leather. In each of these cases the difference is merely the sounding or dropping of an aspirate.

Then we hear a bewildered servant being asked to serve his master with a soldier instead of a biscuit; and a gentleman imagining that he is calling for his hat, when all the time he is asking for the cat; and making remarks about a field which can only apply to heaven.

These are some of the pitfalls into which the outer barbarian falls when making his first attempts at conversation in the language of the Flowery Land. No wonder that he occasionally envies the gift of speech possessed by the chattering little Celestials playing in the streets!

Having spoken of the difficulties of the language our young Chinaman has to speak and write, let us look over his shoulder, and see what books he is studying. The first of all is the *San-Tsz-King*, or 'Trimetrical Classic,' because, to make it more easily remembered, it is written in lines of three words each. The teacher repeats the first few lines, and the scholars, holding their books in their hands, and swinging their small bodies backwards and forwards, follow his pronunciation of the words. They then return to their seats and commit the words to memory. In order to be sure each small boy is attending to his lessons, he is expected to shout out the passage he is learning at the top of his voice. The continual din caused by this arrangement can be better imagined than described; and when you pass a school-house in China, you are more likely to suspect the existence of Bedlam than of a place of learning.

The first sentence in the Chinese boys' primer runs as follows:—'Men at their birth are by nature radically good.' The importance of study is then enlarged upon, and a sentence

WUCHANG.

occurs to the effect that 'To educate without severity shows a teacher's indolence.' The sight of the bamboo rod, which is found in every school-room close to the master's hand, and in very constant use, is a proof that this maxim of the sage of old commends itself to the teachers of the present day. Chinese boys then go on to learn that there are three great powers—Heaven, earth, and man; that there are three lights—the sun, moon, and stars. They are further informed that rice, millet, pulse, wheat, rye, and barley are the six kinds of grain on which men subsist. Various other matters of a similar kind are touched upon, followed by a summary of Chinese history. Afterwards, the example of sages and prodigies of past ages is commended to the notice of the youthful pupils. I will mention a few of these eminent examples of devotion to literature in olden times.

One celebrated student, Sun King by name, lived more than two thousand years ago, when the dynasty of Chau held sway in China. So enthusiastic was his devotion to study that he constantly shut himself up in his private apartments, and, lest he should be overcome by drowsiness, he fastened the hair of his head by a cord to a beam in the roof.

Another eminent scholar, whose family was poor, studied by the light from a number of glow-worms he had collected. And yet another conned his task by the light of the reflected snow. One committed his lesson to memory while bending beneath the weight of a load of faggots he carried on his back; and yet another, whose thirst for knowledge could be controlled by no difficulties, fastened his book to the horns of one of the cows he was tending.

One 'pattern of industry' took up his abode in the fastnesses of a celebrated mountain to study for his first degree.

It was his custom to cast all family letters aside unopened, when he had ascertained that the characters signifying peace and health appeared upon the cover. His motive in doing so was to keep his mind free from all distraction of outside matters. A boy at the age of seven is described as being in all his conduct most dignified and decorous. He always used a round piece of wood for his pillow, so that he could awake easily and apply himself diligently to his studies. A second lad, who lived before the Christian era (for all these wonderful specimens of devotion to literature seem to have flourished in far-distant ages), was, although very poor, most anxious to become a scholar. He hit upon the device of boring a hole through the partition of his room to the house of his next-door neighbour. By the faint light from his friend's lamp, which struggled through the chink he had made, he pored over his books, and became ultimately famous. At the age of seven, Wang Yu-ching could compose remarkable literary essays. He was the *protégé* of a certain assistant-prefect, who was charmed with his singular talents. One day this gentleman was dining with a friend, and the common Chinese entertainment of suggesting the first line of an impromptu stanza was introduced, the guests being invited to match the line. It was as follows : ' The parrot though it talks cannot compare with the phœnix.' None of the visitors were equal to the task, but upon returning home the assistant-prefect's little friend immediately suggested the admirable line—

'The spider though skilful cannot compare with the silkworm.'

Chinese boys know something of arithmetic and calculate very rapidly, but they do this with their little abacus, or counting-board.

Several other books are studied, and the classic of Filial Piety is largely used as a reading-book, and is more common in China than any *Boys' Own Paper* in England. Some of the stories it contains give such graphic glimpses of Chinese life and character that I cannot do better than relate a few of them for your amusement.

Mang Tsung and the Bamboo Shoots.

In days of old, during the dynasty of Chin, there lived a lad who was called Mang Tsung. While still very young he had the misfortune to lose his father. With a filial heart he constantly did reverence before the carved tablet within which dwelt the spirit of his departed sire. More than this, he devoted himself to the care of his widowed mother, serving her with unwearying devotion and seeking to supply her every want. Now it happened one day, in the middle of winter, when the land was covered with a thin mantle of snow, and trees were bare of leaves, that Mang's mother fell ill, and would eat no food. Wearily she murmured, 'If I could but have a dish of the bamboo shoots which are found in the bright spring-time, I would eat of them and be restored to strength again.' His mother's words pierced poor Mang Tsung's tender heart. He desired that her every wish should be gratified; but how could the most diligent seeker find young bamboo shoots in the depth of winter? With a heavy heart the lad crept away from his old mother's side and went out into the open street. He wandered along, scarce knowing whither he went, till he came to the bamboo grove in the shadow of an ancient temple. Falling full length upon the bare frozen earth, he clasped his arms around the shining glossy stems of the graceful bamboos, watering the ground

meanwhile with his fast-falling tears, when, lo! the bare wintry earth around the shoots became loosened, and was pierced by the tender white shoots of the young bamboos. Joyfully Mang cut them down, and hurrying home, cooked and presented the longed-for dainty to his sick mother.

Eagerly she partook of the dish procured for her by the devotion of her son, and before she had finished the repast her strength returned, and she was restored to health again. And so influenced were heaven and earth by the pious conduct of this filial son, that ever since the bamboos have continued to put forth their shoots in the dull days of winter, instead of waiting for the awakening and vivifying influences of the spring.

Lao Lai-tsz, or the Filial Son.

Long, long ago, at the time when the kings of the Chow dynasty ruled in China (three thousand years since), there lived a man whose name was Lao Lai-tsz. He had attained to the age of seventy, but since his venerable parents were still alive, he always declared that he was not old, and refused to be addressed by the title 'Venerable' or 'Ancient.' His one desire in life seemed to be to make his beloved relatives forgetful of the flight of time, and to fill their hearts with mirth and gladness. He provided for them the daintiest of dishes, and served them day and night with unwearying devotion. Very often he would dress himself in a coat of many colours, just as if he were once more a child. Then he would dance and play before the old people, holding in his hands the toys of his infancy. Now and then he would go to the well and bring back a pail of clear water. Entering the guest room he would stumble like a child upon the threshold,

and, falling upon the floor, pretend to cry piteously. Then running up to his old parents' side, he would beg to be comforted by them as in the days of his childhood. All this was done by Lao Lai-tsz with the noble object of gratifying and amusing his venerable relatives, and making them forget, for a time at least, their great age, and imagine that they were once more the youthful parents of a little child.

The Reward of Koh Kü.

In the time of the dynasty of Han there lived a man whose name was Koh Kü. His aged mother was sheltered beneath his roof, and he and his wife were the parents of a fine boy three years of age. Very happily they lived together, till adversity like a dark cloud brooded over the little family, and the father's labour could barely maintain them. Day by day the ancient dame shared with her little grandson her scanty meal. The cruel hand of famine rested upon them, their faces grew thin, and their strength failed. Then one day Koh Kü called to his wife to bring out the child and follow him. Shouldering his spade, he hastened on beyond the bamboo fence which bounded their small homestead, and coming to a standstill, he addressed his wife in the following words: 'I have, alas, become so poor as to be unable to support my mother, and the child is constantly sharing the small portion of its grandmother, while both are growing weaker before our eyes. Another child may possibly be born to us, but a mother once dead can never return again. Let us bury the child, so that we may have sufficient for the maintenance of my mother.'

The terrified wife was silent with fear; she dare not dispute her husband's will, but held the little one pressed closely to her

bosom, while the husband dug the grave of his living child. Suddenly she heard a dull tinkling sound as the spade struck against some hard substance. It was followed by an exclamation of joy, as she soon saw her husband lifting some object out of the half-dug grave. It was a pot of gold, and it bore the following inscription: 'Heaven bestows this treasure upon the dutiful son, Koh Kü. The magistrates must not claim it, neither must his neighbours attempt to take it from him.'

In such a signal manner did Heaven reward the filial son, who valued so lightly the life of his child in comparison with the well-being of his aged mother.

The Images that Wept.

Ting Lan was a man who lived in the days of the Han dynasty. His parents both died while he was still an infant, so that he was unable to repay them in the smallest degree for all their love and care. He was always longing to discover some way in which he could make his departed parents conscious of his deep devotion. One day he was seized with an inspiration, and taking up a piece of fragrant wood, he carved out of it the figures of his deceased parents, and henceforth tried to satisfy his loving heart by constantly watching and tending them as if they were indeed the forms of his beloved relatives.

Now it happened that Ting Lan's wife was a woman who had little sympathy with him in his filial devotion; in fact, she often made fun of him, refusing to do reverence before the images, or to take her share in waiting upon them. At last a day came when Ting Lan was absent from home, and it occurred to his wife that she would amuse herself by pricking the wooden hands of the images with her needle; when,

behold, drops of blood were seen to flow from the scars she had made, and soon after, upon the return of her husband, he discovered that tears were falling from their eyes. He investigated the cause of their grief, and upon discovering it, this filial son divorced his irreverent wife, sending her away from his home for ever.

The Story of Wang Liang.

In the far-away time of the dynasty of Chin, there lived a boy whose name was Wang Liang. When he was very young he had the misfortune to lose his mother. His father soon afterwards married a woman whose name was Chu. This new wife was of a scolding and unamiable disposition, and she took a violent dislike to her small step-son. Daily and hourly she had some fault to find with him, and was always complaining of him to his father. Wang Liang felt this to be the unkindest cut of all, since even his father's approval was no longer his. At length a day came when the sky was dull and leaden, while the streets and roofs of the houses were white with fallen snow. Not only were the little icicles hanging from the curled eaves of the houses, but pond and lake and river were alike covered with a thick sheet of ice. Mrs. Wang had enlivened the dull hours of the short winter's day with ceaseless complaints, till at last, throwing herself down on her stiff-backed chair, and warming her arms with the small hand-stove which was hidden away in her capacious sleeves, she exclaimed, 'Would that I had a dish of carp fresh from the lake!'

Now that was an extremely foolish desire for Mrs. Wang to give expression to, since with every piece of water for miles around covered with ice, how was it possible for any one to obtain fresh fish? But her step-son, who had listened silently

to her exclamation, crept quietly out of the room, and slipping on his bright-coloured wind-cap and thrusting his small hands up into his long sleeves, he hurried along to the river-side.

It stretched away before him in the silent moonlight, a plain of ice dusted with powdery snow.

Hastily he cast aside his garments till he was all exposed to the keen blast of the wild winter wind. Then he threw himself down on the unyielding ice, in the hope that the warmth from his small shivering body would melt it away beneath him. Upon such filial devotion as this Heaven will always smile; and the thick sheet of ice was made to melt away beneath the dutiful lad, and two fine carp leaped out from the dark-flowing stream. They were joyfully seized by the lad's ready hand, and hastily attiring himself he made his way to his father's house.

Kneeling at the feet of his unamiable step-mother, while he knocked his head to the ground, he presented her with the fish for which she had apparently so vainly longed.

The little book from which these stories are extracted is known by the title of the *Twenty-four Examples of Filial Piety*. Each story is illustrated with a wood-cut representing the hero engaged in performing his special act of filial piety. There is little doubt that the incidents recorded in this small volume, and accepted by the Chinese as historical facts, have been in no small degree influential in forming the characters of China's rising generation. A favourite Chinese proverb teaches that 'Of the hundred virtues the chief is filial piety,'—and no other duty is so carefully and constantly instilled into the children's minds as this.

CHAPTER V

CHINESE BOYS AT PLAY

But what about the life of these little Chinamen and China-women when school work is over and lessons done? Surely, though they are dressed in clothing of the same pattern as their grandfathers and grandmothers, and have such wonderful memories for their extremely dry and uninteresting lessons, they must occasionally find time for a romp or game of some sort, or they would not be boys and girls at all. This is perfectly true; and though the Chinese boys have no cricket or football, no marbles or hockey, and understand nothing of paper-chases and boating, they are not without some amusements; and even if they are a trifle more old-fashioned and sober than English children, yet they enjoy their games quite as heartily.

Kite-flying is the great delight of Chinese boys, though not of boys alone, but also of their fathers and grandfathers. And what famous kites they have too! Some are in the form of beautiful birds, or butterflies, with wings cleaving the air; others are in the shape of men, or various animals, dragons, and centipedes. Occasionally a tiny paper lantern is fastened to the tail of a kite, and being lighted it has a very pretty effect as it rises, shining like a star in the twilight. Sometimes a number of bird-kites are fastened by short lines to the principal cord,

THE PUNCH AND JUDY SHOW.

and when flying in the air look like a flight of birds clustering round one common centre.

The great day for the commencement of kite-flying is the ninth of the ninth moon; and the selection of this particular day has, like most things in China, a superstitious origin. 'Once upon a time,' they say, 'in the far-away ages of the past, a man was warned that on a certain day a great calamity would befall him and his. When the time came round, the man, with every member of his household, decided to leave home and spend the day in the country, among the hills. Upon returning at nightfall he found that all his domestic animals were dead. The day was the ninth of the ninth month; and ever since, people have been careful to absent themselves from home on that singularly inauspicious day; and in order to enliven the time they amuse themselves by flying kites.'

Then there are the lanterns of all sizes and shapes, which are the pride of the first month of the year. Gay indeed are the streets of a Chinese city from the tenth to the fifteenth of the first moon; for though most of the shops are closed, and all other business suspended for nearly a fortnight, the lantern-sellers do a brisk trade. Chinese ingenuity is taxed to find new shapes for these lanterns. The salesmen, with their wares attached to long bamboo poles, take up their positions outside the closed shop fronts, and the streets are so crowded with spectators and buyers that it is very difficult to make one's way along.

Most of the lanterns are made of bright-coloured paper, over a light bamboo framework. Some are made in the shape of a ball fixed to the end of a stick, others are like rabbits, horses, or fowls, and are mounted on wheels. Some are in the form of

shrimps, crabs, or beetles; others are representations of favourite flowers, such as the lotus and camellia. A large number are made of light gauze or silk, and have mythological or historical scenes painted upon them. But the most expensive of all contain wheels and fine wires, which are made to revolve by the heated air inside when the lantern is lighted. The small figures on the outside, to whose heads, legs, or arms the wires are attached, then begin to move, and we see, here an old man fishing, there a ferryman rowing across a stream, and here, again, two Chinese gentlemen exchanging New Year's greetings.

When Chinese children want more active amusements, they play battledore and shuttlecock, only the battledore is usually the thick sole of the shoe, or the instep of the foot. They manage them so cleverly that it is quite common to see the shuttlecock struck some two or three hundred times without a single miss.

Ta chiau, or 'hitting the ball,' is another favourite game. English boys would no doubt consider it rather monotonous, since it is simply played by striking the ball to the ground with the hand as many times as possible.

Ta teh-lo is 'whipping the top.' A Chinese top is made of bamboo, with a piece of wood going through it, and a large hole is cut in the side, which makes it have a fine humming sound as it spins. 'Hiding from the cat' is not unlike our English 'blind man's buff;' one child having his eyes blinded, and trying to catch the others, who escape from him in all directions.

'Catching shrimps' is another game, in which all the boys have their eyes covered, and try to catch each other. Ta pan is not unlike hopscotch. Every child has a small flat stone or copper cash, and standing on a marked line, tries to strike the stone which has been thrown by the first boy.

'Turning the dragon' is the favourite amusement of Chinese boys in the spring-time; and, like most of their pleasures, it has a religious or superstitious signification. The passage of this fabulous animal through the streets of their cities is believed to be very effectual in dispelling all evil influences, especially a tendency to various sicknesses thought to exist in the first month of the year.

The body of the dragon is composed of a large number of lanterns fastened together, and covered with coloured paper and cloth. It is frequently thirty or forty feet long. The numerous joints of which it is composed make it capable of being twisted and turned in all directions, and its formidable-looking head and wagging tail make it indeed a striking object.

Long poles are attached to a number of the joints, and in the evening it is brightly lighted up. As the many-jointed creature is carried through the streets, turning and twisting in all directions, rearing its ill-favoured head and gaping mouth, it is pursued by immense crowds of people. The procession accompanying it makes a most unearthly din, beating gongs, and letting off squibs and crackers, to the great amazement of the Western stranger who for the first time looks upon the singular spectacle.

Another game somewhat similar to this is described as the 'Lion playing with the ball.' The lion is made in very much the same way as the dragon, and is carried by two men or boys. Poles are not usually employed, as in carrying the dragon; but the boys insert their heads in the body of the monster, while their figures and legs are dressed to represent the imaginary legs of the animal. This representation of the king of beasts is made with gaping jaws, which are a great convenience to the persons who put themselves in the position of his legs and feet, since

A CRICKET FIGHT.

they can see through the opening what is going on. The Chinese have an idea that the lion is very fond of playing with a ball, and accordingly a boy walks in front of the procession carrying a very large one. This young hopeful darts across the lion's path, running hither and thither to his heart's content; and wherever the ball is seen the lion follows, causing great amusement not only to the boys who take part in the procession, but to the spectators who crowd the streets.

The performances of the Punch and Judy shows are much appreciated by Chinese children, and many people are inclined to believe they were introduced into England from China. In any case, they were well known in that empire many hundreds of years ago.

As for the pets kept by Chinese boys, some of them are identical with those which are prized by English children—such as rabbits, kittens, and gold fish. Crickets are also very largely kept by boys, as well as older people. Chinamen are so fond of gambling that it is no wonder we should see the children imitating their fathers, and the boys are very fond of placing two of these insects in a bowl or deep dish, and irritating them with a straw or stick till they begin to fight desperately, each boy risking the few cash he may possess on the chance of the cricket he selects being the winner of the fight.

They have many favourite birds, among others the canary and lark, and one very much prized is a sort of thrush, called the 'bird with the flowery eyebrow.' You may often see the boys walking on the city walls or other open spaces, carrying their caged birds out for an airing. Another little creature which affords them much amusement is the cicada, which they capture in the early summer-time, while he sings his hoarse song on the flower stalks or among the bushes. The poor

insect is confined in a tiny cage of bamboo, and is occasionally poked up by his juvenile owner, to drone out as hoarse and unmusical a ditty as ever he chirruped in the days of his freedom. Hedgehogs and tortoises are also kept as pets: the latter is believed to attain to a great age, and is used, with the stork, as an emblem of longevity.

ITINERANT TOYMAN.

Few Chinese toys are of a durable nature. There are not many toy-shops, but cheap playthings are sold by an itinerant vendor of small wares, whose approach is announced by the beating of a gong, which calls the children as quickly out of the houses as the music of Hamelin's Pied Piper is said to have done. They gather in crowds round his baskets loaded with clay or pasteboard figures. Here are

cages with miniature birds in them ; ladies riding on nondescript animals supposed to represent mules ; carts carrying a drum which beats as the wheels revolve. Figures of genii and idols abound; and now and then an extraordinary figure is seen, whose light-coloured locks, tight-fitting clothing, and the stick carried in the hand proclaim it to be intended for a 'foreign barbarian.'

ITINERANT SELLER OF SWEETMEATS.

Most Chinese children are possessed of the proverbial 'sweet tooth,' and the demand for sugar-candy and sweetmeats is very liberally supplied. The whole stock-in-trade of the Chinese confectioner is often carried in two baskets suspended on a pole from the man's shoulders.

One basket contains the pots, pans, and other utensils necessary for the prosecution of his trade; the other a tempting array of sweets of all shapes and sizes. Some are of various bright colours and curious shapes, and many contain morsels of ground-nuts or walnuts. In front of these sugar stalls a revolving pointer is often seen, a circle of barley-sugar being ranged beneath it. Few Chinese boys are able to resist the temptation of paying down their cash for a turn at the wheel, in the hope that they may gain two or three sticks for their money instead of one.

Nuts also are in great demand among Chinese school-boys. Beside walnuts and ground-nuts, they have water-nuts, and are fond of melon and sunflower seeds; while small pieces of sugar-cane, sold at the rate of one-twentieth part of a penny each, are eagerly bought up. So you see that Chinese boys are not unlike English children in enjoying a good game of play, and they also very highly appreciate the sweetmeats upon which so many pennies are spent with so much satisfaction in our own land.

The difference between Chinese and English boys lies in the fact that with us active sports requiring physical exertion are commended; whereas in China all violent exercise is discouraged, and a boy is taught that the more dignified and grave his deportment, the greater approbation will he receive from his elders.

Chinese boys are fond of asking riddles, and some of the juvenile prodigies of ancient days are represented as having been very clever in composing these enigmas. Many of them it is not possible to give in English, because they are puns upon Chinese words; and others relate to some peculiarity in the way in which a character is written, or to some resemblance it bears to another character with a different meaning.

I will give two of the latter—

'A joking Siuts'ai, or Bachelor of Arts, asked a Buddhist priest (who as a class are usually ignorant), "How do you write 'bald pate'?" alluding to the shaven head which is the distinctive mark of the Buddhist priesthood.

'"That is quite easy," was the unexpected reply. "I take the Bachelor of Art's tail and turn it round."'

秀 Bachelor of Arts. 禿 Bald-head.

Another, somewhat similar in form to many popular English riddles, is the following—

'What is that which raises its head in embarrassment and lowers it in wealth?'

The character 田. In wealth 富 it is at the foot, in embarrassment 累 at the head of the character of which it forms a part.

Others of a different kind are more readily understood in England, so I will mention several.

'What is the fire that has no smoke, and the water that has no fish?'

'A glow-worm's fire has no smoke, and well-water has no fish.'

'Mention the name of an object with two mouths, which travels by night and not by day.'

'A lantern.'

'What is that of which we have too much, and that of which we desire more?'

'A summer day is too long (on account of the great heat), and we wish a winter day were longer.'

'What are the eyes of heaven, the bones of water, and the looking-glass of the sky?'

The answers are, 'Stars, ice, and the sea.'

'What is it that has a gaping mouth, and marches on like an invading army, devouring at every step?'

'A pair of scissors cutting cloth.'

The amusement of solving riddles is so popular in China among all classes, that at the time of the Feast of Lanterns you may often see a group of literary men, as well as the common people, gathered round a doorway, over which hangs a lantern upon which several enigmas are written.

Prizes varying from several hundreds of cash to some trifling gift of nuts, sweetmeats, etc., are offered for the correct solution of these riddles, and crowds of people collect and engage in eager competition, rather on account of the sport afforded than for the value of the prize offered.

A CHINESE LANTERN AND BEARER.

CHAPTER VI

CHINESE GIRLS AT HOME

If you were to ask a Chinaman how many children he had in his family, he would reply by telling you the number of his sons. The girls among them are not counted: why should such worthless little beings be reckoned in with their ever-welcome, eagerly-desired brothers?

'A boy is worth ten times as much as a girl;' and, 'If a girl does no harm, it is enough: you cannot expect her to be either useful or good,' are two of the common sayings of which I could quote many to show you how lightly the daughters of China are valued.

How I wish the girls of England would think sometimes of their little sisters in far-off China! Girls looking back to a childhood all unlike that of England's happy daughters, to a future more different still.

Let us take a peep into some of these Chinese homes both of the richer and the poorer classes, and try and find out the sort of life the girls live, and why they are thought so little of.

One reason for the universal feeling that girls are useless burdens is hinted at in the Chinese proverb, 'A daughter is like a fine young bamboo springing up just outside your garden fence.' That is, the child may be fair and lovable, but she does not belong to you: as soon as she is old enough to repay

a parent's care, she goes off into another family, and is rarely if ever seen by her own relatives.

Girls in China are married, or taken into the family of the little boy to whom they are betrothed, at such an early age that their parents see very little of them after the years of childhood are past.

CHRISTIAN SCHOOL-GIRLS.

But a stronger reason than this lies in the fact of the disappointment that parents feel when for the first time a baby-girl opens her eyes upon the strange new world, and takes the place, as it seems to them, of the boy they would have been so glad to welcome. And why, you will ask, do they value their sons so much? Principally, perhaps, because the more sons they have the more important people will they be—since these sons will not only always remain under their father's roof, but young wives will be brought there, and families grow up in the same house. A man with many sons becomes before long a person of importance.

Besides this, it is believed that when a man dies and passes

into the unseen world he needs food and clothing and money, just as he did while on earth. The Chinese profess to have found out a plan for supplying a dead man with all he needs. Paper money, paper garments, paper houses, furniture, and servants are all burned, and are thus transmitted into the world beyond the grave. And only boys can render this service to their parents. If a family consists of girls only, then no one will be able to worship and burn incense before the spirit tablet which will be set up in the home of the departed when they die, which one of their spirits is supposed to enter. For a Chinaman believes he has three souls, and at death one is buried with the body, another enters the unseen world, the third dwells in the tablet. The hungry unclothed spirits of those who leave behind them no sons to attend to their wants, will wander destitute and homeless in the dim regions of the spirit world. Is it wonderful, when they believe this, that girls are despised and lightly valued by the Chinese, while boys are highly prized and fondly loved ?

Sometimes soon after a little girl is born her father will call in a blind fortune-teller, who is supposed to know all about the future. These men are constantly seen going up and down Chinese streets beating on the little gong they carry in their hands to let people know they are coming. When the fortune-teller is questioned about the little girl, and told the year, month, day, and hour of her birth, he makes a calculation, and perhaps tells them that their little daughter will be very unfortunate all through life ; she has been born under a very unlucky star, and nothing she does will prosper. Then the parents think, if their child is likely to be so unfortunate, they had better at once give her to some nuns, to be brought up by them, since then she will at least never want for food or clothing. These child nuns are

taught by the older inhabitants of the nunnery to weave and embroider, and not unfrequently to read and write. They serve the elder devotees and assist in the temple services, and on the whole their lot is less hard than that of many Chinese girls in their own homes.

Sometimes the fortune-teller says that the little girl's fate

A CHINESE FORTUNE-TELLER.

is bad: not only will she be unfortunate, but if they keep her in the house she will be the cause of harm to her friends; worst of all, her brother may very likely die. Perhaps he was born in a year of the cycle named 'Hare,' and if she were born on a day of the cycle of the 'Dog,' then her influence will certainly prove fatal to him, unless she be removed, since hares are

destroyed by dogs. In this case the little girl will probably be given away to some woman who is willing to take and bring up a child as the future wife of her little son. It is considered necessary that an arrangement of this kind should be closed by money, and a sum no larger than a shilling is not unfrequently given, because such little girls are thought to be worth nothing. 'Is that your daughter?' I have sometimes asked a Chinese woman, as I have seen a little girl sitting by her side. 'No, she is betrothed to my son,' is a frequent reply, as she looks away to a small boy playing merrily, with his thoughts more exercised by the making of mud-pies than anything else.

If a girl is blind or lame, her chances of life are small.

One child, whom I knew well, was lame, and her family determined to get rid of her, so they carried her to the gate of the Mission compound, and left her there, to see if the 'Jesus teachers' cared to take her. How glad she was when she was taken in, dressed in comfortable clothing, fed, and kindly spoken to! How eagerly she listened to the sweet story of Jesus and His love; of how He made the lame to walk, and placed His hands on the little children's heads, and loves them still—girls even, as well as boys!

You can guess how pleased the missionaries were when, years after, they used to hear the little lame girl telling to new arrivals in the school the joyful Gospel news which had made her own heart glad. She has gone home now to the mansions prepared for Chinese as well as English children. I think she often felt very thankful she was lame, even though she suffered severe pain at times, for if she had been strong and well her parents might never have laid her down at the missionaries' gate, and, like many millions of Chinese children, she might have died without hearing of the Lord Jesus.

What do these Chinese girls look like? you may ask. Well, many of them have bright, attractive faces, and all have very dark eyes. They wear their raven locks dressed in different ways, according to the province in which they live. In most parts the hair is drawn back and twisted into one heavy strand, which hangs down the back, and is tied with scarlet cord. Frequently the front hair is cut, making a fringe similar to an

THE HEAD-DRESS OF A WOMAN.

English fashion. Sometimes two plaits are made and bunched up on either side of the head, being decorated with gaily-coloured flowers. At other times, especially in the winter season, they wear a strange little head-dress, consisting of a silken embroidered band, with a thick black silk fringe hanging down over the forehead and ears. When a girl is about thirteen years of age her hair is put up in womanly style. It

is twisted round curious wire frames of various shapes. Some are like butterflies' wings, others resemble a teapot handle. Other young ladies wear enormous chignons, and Manchu girls have their hair tied in a large bow upon the top of their heads. Until their marriage most girls wear the hair in front dressed round, keeping the natural appearance of the forehead. After the wedding it is dressed square. This appearance is obtained by pulling out the hairs round the forehead, making it look broad and high. Even little girls frequently wear heavy earrings, bracelets, and rings, if they belong to a rich family.

When in holiday attire, most girls have their cheeks adorned with rouge, and a little touch of it just under the lower lip. They also use white powder very plentifully.

A Chinese girl is very little troubled with considerations of fashion. It is true there is a slight difference in the cut of the garments worn by girls and women of different provinces. Most frequently the more costly tunics and embroidered skirts descend from the grandmother down to several generations of her grandchildren. It is true that certain shades in the colour of material are in greater favour one year than another; that the width of the sleeves and the style of trimming does, to some extent, vary, but by no means in the degree that is found in Western lands.

In summer the underclothing of the middle and upper classes is usually composed of fine grass-cloth; in winter, of cotton-cloth. The outer garments are all of the same shape, but differ much in material and colour. In summer the loose tunic or pelisse is often made of beautiful silky Chinese gauze, and will be in colour light blue, green, or grey. The trousers or pantalettes are frequently of the same material, of a different colour,

and you will often see red silk trousers with a green tunic, and purple gauze trousers with a pelisse of figured blue silk. These gorgeous garments are trimmed with gold braid, intermixed with silk of various shades, and the large sleeves of the best tunics are trimmed with broad strips of satin, embroidered with fairy landscapes, or birds and flowers.

CHINESE WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

But the most important part of a young girl's dress in China is her shoes. Such tiny shoes they are, of coloured silk or satin, most tastefully embroidered, with brightly painted heels, just peeping beneath the neat pantalette; and the feet are supposed to merit the poetical name bestowed upon them of 'golden lilies.' But how sad it is to discover that such a result is produced by

indescribable torture, and that the part of the foot which is not seen is nothing but a mass of distorted or broken bones!

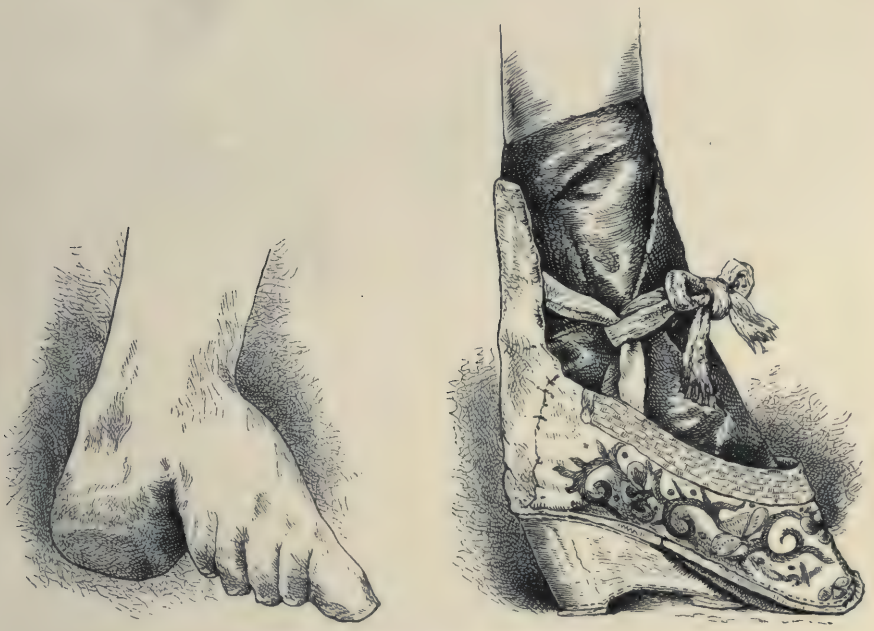
This deformity is produced, not by iron or wooden shoes, as is sometimes supposed, but by narrow cotton bandages about three yards long. They are applied when the little girl is six years old.

One end of the strip of cotton is placed beneath the instep and then carried over the four small toes, drawing them down beneath the foot. Another twist draws the heel and great toe nearer together, making an indentation beneath the sole. When all the cloth has been used, the end is firmly sewed down, and the feet are left for a week or two in that condition. Clean bandages are now and then put on, but the change has to be very rapidly effected, or the blood begins again to circulate in the poor benumbed feet, and the agony becomes almost unbearable. Not unfrequently during the process a girl loses one or two of her toes; but she feels repaid for the pain she endures by being the possessor of still smaller feet. Mothers and nurses frequently perform this duty for their daughters, and in passing a Chinese home one sometimes hears the bitter crying of a child whose feet are being bound.

Yet so strong is the power of fashion, that sooner than be unlike other girls, or have to bear the derision of their neighbours, who will laugh at them and say, 'Just look at those two boats going by,' in reference to their large feet, they prefer to endure the pain. I have known cases of little girls, whose parents had been induced by the missionaries to refrain from binding their feet, who would actually procure bandages and try to do the binding themselves.

For the first year or so the children suffer constant pain. By numberless devices they try to benumb the feet and relieve the

agony. Through the weary summer days they lie restless with fever upon the cool mats of their couch, and when the cold nights of winter come they are afraid to wrap themselves in any covering, since if the limbs grow warm the suffering becomes more intense. When the feet are first bound it is very difficult to use them. Girls can only move about by means of two



GOLDEN LILIES—BARE AND SHOD.

stools, upon which they rest their knees and which are moved alternately by their hands. At last this much-desired smallness is obtained, the girl's foot is deformed for life, and she is greatly admired by all her friends.

'What a good mother she must have had!' is a remark frequently made when a girl is seen with smaller feet than usual.

'Ah,' said a Chinese mother to me, who was grieving over the death of her daughter, 'she was a grown-up girl. Had she been little, I should not have minded at all; and she had the tiniest of tiny feet.' Not, Is she good, or clever, or beautiful? do the guests ask at a Chinese wedding—but, What is the size of her foot?

Three inches is the correct length of the fashionable shoes in which Chinese ladies toddle and limp, supporting themselves on a child's shoulder, or by means of a strong staff. Some very wealthy ladies are the possessors of feet which are almost useless, and as they can hardly walk from one room to another in their spacious mansions, they are not unfrequently carried, especially about their gardens, on the backs of their large-footed attendants. Women whose feet are not quite so small, though still tightly bound, manage to walk occasionally, with great difficulty, a distance of several miles. 'Their movements are as the waving of the willows,' says a Chinese poet in reference to these tiny feet; but to English eyes the gait appears to be by no means elegant, and bears a strong resemblance to what would be obtained by walking on our heels.

This custom has no connection with religion, and is not prescribed by the law of the country. Indeed, no small-footed woman is allowed within the precincts of the imperial palace, and no Manchu woman binds her feet. It is only the spread of Christianity, and the growing up of that Christian public feeling, which teaches compassion for the weak, and sympathetic tenderness for the suffering, that can abolish foot-binding from Chinese homes.

Slowly, but surely, this influence is already working, and in connection with several of our native churches anti-foot-binding societies have been formed. These are joined, not only by

the guardians of young girls, but by the parents of lads. For only when people become willing that their sons should marry large-footed wives can there be any widespread ceasing from bandaging in China. 'I shall never bind the feet of my daughters, or allow them to marry any one but a Christian,' says many a Chinese Christian to-day. And they keep to this resolution, in very many cases in the midst of persecution and suffering, and surrounded on all sides by trials and difficulties we in England know little of.

The origin of this custom of foot-binding seems very doubtful. It is sometimes referred back to an empress of an ancient dynasty, who bound her feet, some say to hide a deformity, and others to make them more beautifully small. Some accounts declare it was introduced with the idea of preventing women from going much from home. The Chinese think if young girls go out of doors they are sure to get into mischief; and in one book the example of an eminent lady of olden times is commended to their notice, who 'for twelve years never looked out of the door of her house.'

Girls of the wealthier classes are seldom seen abroad, but the daughters of the poor lead a much freer and happier life. When little more than babies, and just able to carry a basket and rake, they are sent out on the city wall, to a piece of waste land, or the slope of some neighbouring hill to collect fuel for the family.

They gather the dry grass and sticks, and scrape together the fallen needles of the pine-trees, and everything else that can possibly be used in keeping up the fire, which is lighted only for cooking purposes. The Chinese are not usually particularly unkind to little children, and they need only fear a beating if they fail to gather sufficient fuel to keep the pot boiling. In the

bright spring-time, when the fresh wild herbs are springing up over the waste places and on the slopes of the city wall, the children may be seen filling their baskets, and making in this way a small addition to the family meal.

While still very tiny children, girls are entrusted with the care of the baby. The little one frequently sits on his small sister's back in a scarf which is tied over her shoulders. The baby's feet dangle at her side, his arms are often round her neck, and his small head bobs up and down as she runs about, or sways herself from side to side to quiet him.

Little girls also find very pleasant employment during the cotton harvest in picking the snowy balls. They take care of the silkworms, too, gathering mulberry leaves to feed them upon, till they spin the beautiful balls of delicate floss silk that are woven into the costly plain and flowered fabrics for which China is so justly famous.

Nearly all the girls are taught to assist their mothers in spinning and weaving the cotton-cloth required for the family garments. They also learn to cook the simple meals of rice and sweet potato, or various other vegetables and fish, meat being very rarely indeed within their reach.

Many little girls, while very young, are able to add their mite to the family income by learning under their mother's direction one of the numberless small trades which employ the busy fingers of poor Chinese women.

A large number of children are taught to make the soles which are used for Chinese shoes. They paste pieces of old rag on a board or shutter till a thickness of about half-an-inch is obtained. The substance is then dried in the sun, and, after being stripped from the board, is ready for the shoemaker's use. Others for a short season are employed in the manufacture of

the beautiful lanterns, of all shapes and sizes, which are in such universal request during the festivities of the first month of the year. In Central China also one is often reminded of the lace-making districts of England by seeing girls seated at pillows and turning over bobbins, which are almost identical with those which Cowper saw in his Buckinghamshire village, and wrote—

> 'Yon cottager, who weaves at her own door,
> Pillow and bobbins all her little store;
> Content though mean, and cheerful if not gay,
> Shuffling her threads about the livelong day.'

When will the day come when we shall be able to add of these busy Chinese workers—

> 'Just knows, and knows no more, her Bible true,
> And in that charter reads, with sparkling eyes,
> Her title to a treasure in the skies'?

Other girls are skilful in making small paper boxes used in jewellers' shops, and many are employed in the plaiting of silk to lengthen queues.

The art of embroidering also supplies work to a large number of women and girls. At a very early age the children are taught to assist in their mother's business, and many little girls are kept so closely to their frames that their eyes are permanently injured. The shoe and fancy shops give out a large quantity of work to these busy toilers, but the wages paid for it are very low.

In many cases, for common embroidery not more than threepence a day is paid. For the finer work, whose delicate beauty excites the admiration of all English ladies, they never receive more than eightpence or ninepence a day, working from early dawn till dusk. But the industry which probably employs a far

larger number of girls than any other is that of making paper-money, to be used in the worship of the gods, and of deceased relatives. Much that is used for this purpose consists merely of thin perforated Chinese paper. But the more elaborate paper-money, in the making of which the small hands of children are engaged, takes the form of ingots, similar in appearance to the shoes or lumps of silver used in all large trading transactions. In their manufacture strips of thick paper are twisted into forms bearing a resemblance to the real ingots, and scraps of gilt paper or tinfoil are then pasted on them. They are strung in rows of twenty or more, and represent a considerable amount of money in the supposed currency of the spirit-world.

Not unfrequently girls of the poorer classes are sold as slaves to wealthy ladies. The sums paid for them vary, but frequently do not exceed five pounds. They are usually employed in the care of their mistresses' children, and are often not unkindly treated. But sometimes the mistress is possessed of a violent temper, and will half starve and mercilessly beat her little slave for the smallest misdemeanours; and then their lot is hard indeed.

One little slave in Hankow had been so cruelly beaten by her mistress, who only two years before had given the sum of forty pounds for her, that in despair she took a dose of opium, hoping thus to find in death an escape from her misery. She was only thirteen years of age. Her owners, when they discovered what she had done, tried several native remedies believed to be antidotes: among others they used the warm blood of a fowl just killed. But seeing no sign of recovery, they sent at last for a foreign missionary, having heard that Europeans were often able to restore those who were in the early stages of the opium stupor. When the missionary reached the residence of

the little slave's owner, he found he had been summoned too late. He did all he could, but the unhappy little girl could not be restored.

Another little slave, whose mistress lived in the district ravaged recently by a great famine, made her escape in that time of general distress, and was brought by a relative to a Christian Mission school. She was received by the missionaries, who were kept in ignorance of her former history. As time passed by she made good progress in her studies, and heard of One who gave His life that even little girls might be blessed. She was very happy in her new life, till a day came when, as not unfrequently occurred, some Chinese ladies asked permission to look over the school. It was observed that this little scholar seemed greatly terrified when she saw them, though she gave no reason for her very evident alarm. Some time after, the mystery was explained, when one of the ladies made a formal claim for the child, saying she was her slave who had escaped from her. The little scholar clung to her Christian teachers with tears and entreaties, begging them to allow her to remain with them. But the case was so clear, and the lady's claim so indisputable, that they could not refuse to restore her to her owner, although they did it with sorrowful hearts.

Another girl I knew had been purchased by a family in rather poor circumstances, to bring up as the betrothed of their eldest son. The boy died, and so the poor little girl was kept in the family as the drudge of the household. She never was called by any other name but that of ya-tou or 'slave.' She was only about ten years of age, but was ordered to carry almost constantly, upon her back, a child more than four years of age belonging to her mistress. She was not strong, and the constant carrying of a burden far too heavy for her developed hip-disease,

and the poor child became a constant sufferer. Her owners were so annoyed at her uselessness that they would do little to relieve her pain, and refused to allow her to enter the Mission Hospital. Some time after, the ladies in charge of a Mission boarding-school succeeded in prevailing upon them to give her up to their care. As she was quite unable to do any work for her owners, they at last consented to this arrangement. So the little invalid has found a kind Christian home, and when I last heard of her she was somewhat improving in health.

Other girls are not sold, but pawned by their relatives, in seasons of poverty, and can be reclaimed when the small sum of money advanced upon them is repaid.

I have not yet touched upon the question of the education of Chinese girls, because, unless in very exceptional cases, they receive none. Sometimes a wealthy man will allow his little daughter to share in her brother's studies for a short time; and the children who are brought up in the nunneries are, as I mentioned before, usually taught to read and write.

Most of the heroines of Chinese stories are able not only to read and write, but also to compose rhymes ending with given words—an accomplishment in high repute among Chinese students. But these talented young ladies appear much more frequently in the pages of Chinese story-books than in real life; and this not by any means because Chinese girls are wanting in intelligence, but because it is considered unwise to allow them to become as clever as their future husbands. Moreover, it is feared that if girls learn to read, they will be injured by the study of bad books; since, according to a Chinese writer, 'the feminine mind is unsteady in purpose and easily swerved from the right.' Yet in past ages there have been now and again 'bright particular stars' among the ranks of Chinese women,

especially of the upper classes of society, who have tried to gain some insight into the literature of their country.

One of the most celebrated of these ladies was Pan Chao, who lived in the first century after Christ. She considered that it was desirable that girls should be educated, and so also did the Empress of Tai-Tsung, a ruler of the Tang dynasty. Another lady of high rank who lived at about the same period, spent much time and thought in arranging passages from the classics for the instruction of her niece, who was about to enter the imperial palace.

The several volumes which have been compiled for the use of Chinese girls are all very similar, and usually bear some such title as 'Counsels,' 'Instructions,' or 'Admonitions for the Inner Apartments.' Girls are there exhorted to pay close attention to all household duties, and particular directions are given as to the dress and manners becoming to young maidens. They are taught to be respectful to their elders, and very minute directions are given to guide them in their behaviour to their mother-in-law and their future husband. They are told to cultivate the 'Four Virtues and Three Obediences.' The former relate to correct manners, and include modesty and docility, careful speech, a submissive demeanour, and proper employment, literally 'silk and thread,' which refer to weaving and embroidering.

The 'Three Obediences,' or degrees of dependence, are that of a daughter upon her father, a wife upon her husband, and a mother upon her son. Some of the duties which are enlarged upon in these Chinese girls' primers would meet with approval even in the West. A girl is charged to be truthful, unselfish, and loving; to 'be tranquil and reverent in the thoughts of the heart, and then the inner life will clearly

manifest itself in the outward actions.' She is counselled never to search out other people's affairs, like a busybody, and to treat her handmaids and slaves with forbearance and kindness. 'Do not ferret out the smallest errors in accounts, and then beat the servants if they fall a cash or two short in the reckoning: you may think such conduct a proof of wisdom, but it rather exhibits your parsimony,' is the counsel and verdict of one writer.

One of these books contains an account of an educated Chinese mother who trained her two sons most carefully, and read to them stories of the noble patriots and statesmen of their own country. In after life it is said these sons were known as wise, clean-handed officials, daring to refuse bribes and giving righteous judgment; 'which was certainly the result of their mother's teaching.'

These Chinese books to which I have referred frequently lay down rules relating to the toilette, and what girls should think of while making it. 'Whilst powdering the face they should remember that the heart must be kept white and clean; in arranging the head-dress, consider that the heart needs to be carefully regulated; in oiling the hair, resolve to make the heart pliable and docile.' Most of the girls of the upper classes are instructed in the art of cookery. They are commanded to imitate the example of a certain empress who always superintended the preparation of the dishes which appeared on the emperor's table. Another lady of rank, in days of old, always made it her practice to go into her kitchen at dawn of day and prepare gruel for her servants, ordering them to eat it before commencing their work.

Girls are also taught to show hospitality to strangers; and, since example is always more forcible than precept, the story

CHINESE COUPLE LATELY MARRIED.

of an hospitable lady of olden times is related to them. This eminent dame, when her family were in very poor circumstances, sold her hair to purchase a meal for her guest, and emptied her pillow of straw to satisfy the hunger of his horse.

But these books find their way into the hands of very few Chinese girls, since, as I mentioned before, very few learn to read, and girls' schools, with the exception of those established by missionaries, are almost unknown.

After the age of eight or ten, the daughters of the wealthier classes are kept within the walls of their own homes. It is thought improper for them to be seen out of doors.

They have few amusements, and though they have not to endure the hard grinding poverty of the poorer classes, their life is much more cramped, and they have little variety in it.

Most of the larger houses have fine gardens attached to them, containing winding walks which pass under arches of curious rockwork, and over streams or ponds spanned by the well-known willow-pattern bridge. But the indoor life is very monotonous.

Some girls are taught to play on musical instruments, and to sing songs or selections from the classics, in a high unnatural key, by no means attractive to the ears of Europeans.

They spend much time in working embroidery. The paper patterns for these wonderful flowers, birds, and figures, which are used in the ornamentation of Chinese clothing, can be purchased at embroiderers' shops. But some ladies have quite a talent for inventing new patterns, and I have seen them working most beautiful original designs upon costly silks and satins, which it would be very difficult to find equalled in the shops where such articles are sold.

Chinese girls are betrothed at a very early age, sometimes as mere babies. Frequently a gentleman having a friend in a similar position in life with a little son, will promise, when the years of childhood are past, to give his daughter in marriage to the boy. A 'mei-rin' or match-maker will be employed, the children's horoscopes cast, and for several days the matter is under consideration of both families. If during this time of waiting any accident happens in either family, such as a breakage among the chinaware, or the loss of some trifling article, it is looked upon as an omen of evil, and the match is not concluded. But if all goes on quietly, the parents decide that the betrothal is a suitable one. A number of presents are then exchanged. Among them are two cards. One of these is ornamented with a gilt dragon, and has written upon it a number of particulars relating to the boy. The other is decorated with the picture of a phœnix, and gives similar information about the little girl. A thread of red silk with needles at either end is passed through each of these cards, which, being exchanged, are preserved in the families of the children as signs of betrothal. In reference to this red silk, it is said that the feet of people destined to be married are tied together with invisible threads.

These engagements made by parents for their children are as binding as marriages, although the principal parties know nothing of the arrangements. Very sad surprises constantly occur at Chinese weddings, for frequently no communication takes place between the two families from the time of betrothal. Sometimes the family circumstances have greatly altered, and the father who has promised his child to the son of some wealthy man finds he has given her up to a family in great poverty. Occasionally it is found that since the betrothal the

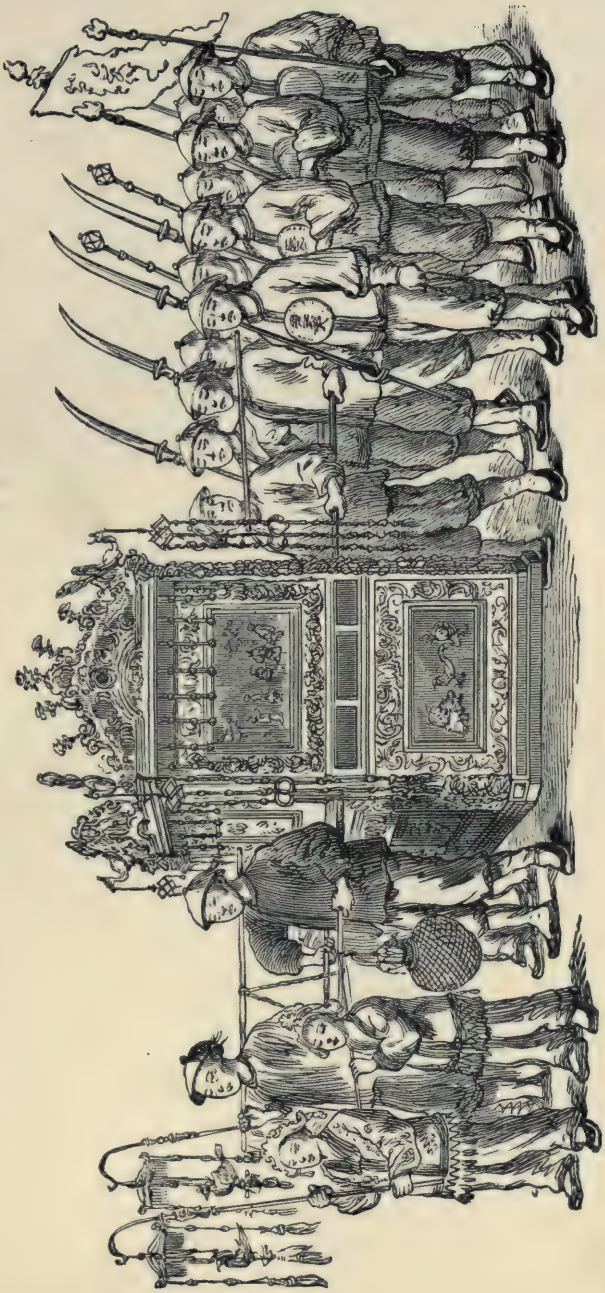
bridegroom has become a helpless cripple. In another case of which I heard, the bride had been attacked by the terrible disease of leprosy; and in another, the bridegroom had fallen a victim to that incurable malady.

When the marriage day arrives, the girl-bride is brought to her new home in the grand bridal chair of brilliant scarlet, elaborately decorated. None of her friends accompany her, with the exception of two old women, who act the part which is in England allotted to the girlish companions of the bride. One of these old women is the go-between, or match-maker, and the other takes the part of mistress of the ceremonies. The bride's relatives are supposed to remain in their own home and bewail her loss. When the door of the bridal chair is opened no flowing robes of white are revealed, for white is the colour of mourning, and must on no account be worn at a wedding. The little bride is usually attired in garments of various colours, but a large robe of scarlet is worn over all the rest. Her hair is adorned with a massive head-dress of gilt ornaments, and her head is covered with a veil of scarlet silk or cloth, which quite conceals her features.

At the wedding breakfast, at which the bride and bridegroom alone sit down, and of which the bride is never expected to partake, she sits motionless, her face still covered with the veil. They each drink out of two cups of wine, which are tied together with a silken thread. During this meal the mistress of ceremonies chants a song, supposed to be composed for the occasion, in which she predicts that every nuptial blessing shall be the portion of the young pair before her.

When the bridegroom has finished his repast, he leads his young wife into the decorated bridal chamber, where a large number of red boxes, containing the young lady's wardrobe, are

piled up. The young husband then removes the veil, and for the first time looks upon the face of the girl who has become his wife. Soon after the bride and bridegroom together worship the spirit tablets of departed ancestors, and do reverence to the elder members of the family. A grand marriage feast is the climax of the day's festivities; and afterwards a large number of friends, both men and women, are admitted to look upon the face of the bride, and to make the most personal remarks upon her appear-



THE BRIDAL CHAIR.

ance. This is an ordeal through which every Chinese bride passes, and through a great part of the day I have frequently seen them standing, poor trembling girls, little more than children, with downcast, immovable faces—for a Chinese bride is taught that she must appear alike unconscious of blame or praise, of rude criticism or friendly words of sympathy.

The bride is not supposed to visit her parents till four months after the wedding. Not unfrequently this visit is a very sad one, when the young wife has to tell the story of some cruel and heartless mother-in-law, who makes life a torture to all who are in her power. Sad to say, these visits to the old home are often taken advantage of by miserable young wives to attempt to put an end to their lives. For life is so lightly valued by them that the taking of it seems only a very little thing.

But there are also comparatively happy marriages, considering the strange way in which they are brought about. Yet the life of all women in China is drearier or sadder than that of the men; and that must always be the case in lands where the compassionate teachings of the Christian religion are not known. For there might is right, and the weak ones have to suffer under the rule of the strong.

Should a girl in China lose her betrothed, or a young wife her husband, she is highly commended if she takes opium, or in some other way contrives to follow him into the unseen world. Outside the walls of many Chinese cities, as well as in some public streets, I have frequently seen monumental arches erected to perpetuate the memory of filial sons and daughters, or of young women who have killed themselves sooner than outlive their betrothed or their husband. Cases of this kind are reported to the emperor, if the young lady is of a high

social position, and these arches are erected at his command. A young lady connected with the family of a previous Chinese ambassador to England received this honour after death, and the case was reported in the pages of the *Peking Gazette*, or official newspaper of China.

Many stories are related of the virtues possessed by heroines

A MUSICAL PARTY.

of past ages. Some of these are particularly warlike in spirit, but the leading idea in each is usually the cultivation of filial piety, and the devotion at all costs to a father's interests. I will give a condensed report of one of these stories, since they convey some idea of the virtues which are considered worthy of imitation by the daughters of the Flowery Land.

More than fourteen centuries ago there lived in the province

of Hunan a celebrated general whose name was Wha. He had an only daughter who was called Moh-lan. This young lady had been duly instructed in all womanly arts, such as spinning, weaving, and embroidering; and in addition she had been taught to use the bow and arrow, and moreover was an accomplished horsewoman. General Wha was a brave commander, and his name was a terror to the border tribes which ravaged the empire. He was now, however, advanced in years, and had humbly petitioned the emperor for permission to retire from his laborious post. But the imperial army could ill afford to lose so noted a general, and the Son of Heaven insisted that the aged and feeble soldier should, under pain of his heaviest displeasure, take up his position at the head of the troops. The imperial couriers delivered their message to the sick commander, and Moh-lan, sitting at her loom behind the curtains of the apartments of the women, heard the order also, and knew that it must be obeyed. She had no brother to take his father's place and lead the troops to victory. She was only a girl, but she rose to the occasion, and determined to do all that a son might have done. The decision was no sooner made than carried out. Hastily she encased her small feet in her father's military boots, then seizing his weapons, with his plumed hat upon her head, she sprung upon his noble war-horse, and galloped away to put herself at the head of the army. Seeing the familiar arms and trappings of their beloved commander, the troops supposed the maiden to be some young officer who had been appointed at his request to lead them, and gladly followed to victory. For more than ten years after this Moh-lan's course was one of uninterrupted success. At last every enemy was subdued, and the land was at peace. Only then did Moh-lan return to her old home, to find that her

venerated father had passed away, and her other relatives were doubtful of her identity. At length they were convinced, and received her with open arms. The emperor, when he heard it rumoured that his all-conquering commander was but a woman, sent for her to court, and gave her hand in marriage to one of the high officers of state. When she died a splendid monument was erected by imperial command to commemorate her filial piety and patriotism.

NEW YEAR'S MODE OF SALUTATION.

CHAPTER VII

CHINESE FESTIVALS AND HOLIDAYS

RAT-TAT-TAT! Bang—bang! On all sides there were such strange noises that one might have imagined a volley of artillery was being exploded. These were the sounds that awoke me at the hour of midnight when I had been for only two days a dweller in the Celestial Empire. What could be the matter? Were the inhabitants of the far-famed mart of Hankow turning out *en masse* to hold the fort against some attacking enemy?

It was nothing very serious after all, for I soon found that the cannonading which was deafening my ears was nothing more than the continuous letting off of fireworks to frighten away the spirits of evil which it was feared might be prowling around on New Year's morning.

It was the dawn of the greatest festival of the Chinese year, and the people had for days past been making the most extensive preparations to celebrate it. It had been a time of general house-cleaning everywhere. New charms and scrolls had been bought to decorate and protect each home. New clothes had been purchased or taken out of pawn, and nearly everybody looked smiling and good-tempered, since the great holiday and rest of the year was at hand.

There is no weekly day of rest in China, the shops are

A VILLAGE AUDIENCE IN CHINA.

open and the streets full of eager buyers and sellers every day alike. When the missionaries go through the streets to the Christian chapels on the Sabbath day, they are often saddened as they pass through the midst of these busy crowds. The multitudes of those who are bowing down to gods of wood and stone are so great, they seem for a time to blot out the encouraging thought of the 'little flock' which is being gathered out of the midst of these Chinese cities—men and women, and even little children, who have heard the glad tidings of Jesus' love, and are trying to follow in His footsteps.

A month in China commences with a new moon, and so New Year's Day is not on the first of January, as with us, but very frequently quite at the end of our first month, or even as late as the second or third week of February.

Very few Chinamen ever think of retiring to rest on New Year's Eve. They have an idea that watching for the dawn of New Year's morning several years in succession will ensure to them long life. Even the children of Chinese families usually sit up, as we say, to see the New Year in, but they call it 'to round the year.' In some parts a few faggots of pine wood are lighted in a space before the stand upon which the ancestral tablets are placed. The boys and girls greatly enjoy the fun of exploding crackers and throwing handfuls of salt upon the flames. The crackling sound made by the burning salt is thought to be an omen of good.

Santa Claus is not known to Chinese juveniles, but late on New Year's Eve it is common for the head of a family to present the children and servants of the household with some copper cash strung on a scarlet cord, since it is considered unlucky to begin the year with an empty purse.

The last night of the old year is always a busy time with

tradespeople in China, for every one is expected to pay their debts contracted during the year. If it is not possible to discharge them in full, they must at any rate pay off a considerable portion of them before the new year dawns. When once the great day arrives, nothing but peace and goodwill is supposed to reign, and if a man is still in debt, his creditor is not expected to press his claim again till some months at least have passed.

As all shops will be closed for several days, it is necessary that every family should lay in a good stock of provisions. It used to be the custom for most shops to be closed for a fortnight; and the lovers of old customs often bemoan the fact that year after year shops are being opened earlier, and the necessaries of life can be readily bought when the year is four or five days old. The longer a tradesman keeps his shop closed the more respectable he is considered by his neighbours.

The first ceremony which a Chinaman performs when the hour of midnight has passed and the new year has been entered, is to worship before the spirit tablets of his ancestors, and at the shrine of the household gods. After this the whole family go out of the front door of the house, while the women and servants of the household lift up lamps or torches to give them light. They then bow down and do reverence towards a part of the heavens which has been indicated in the almanac. This is commonly spoken of as the worship of heaven and earth, though it is described in the almanac as the ceremony of receiving the spirit of gladness or good fortune, which it has been ascertained will come out of that quarter of the heavens.

This is considered by a Chinaman the most important moment of the year. He has a terrible dread lest his 'first

foot,' as they say in Scotland, should be a person who will bring him ill-fortune—a shaven priest, for instance. The first words he hears too have a fearful significance to him, should they unfortunately refer to fire, shipwreck, loss of office, failure in business, an evil spirit, a serpent, sickness, separation or death. And not only the words themselves significant of these things are unlucky, but other words with quite a different meaning but a similar sound to the unfortunate phrases. On the other hand, if some words relating to prosperity and gladness are the first that greet his ear, the Chinaman's heart is filled with joy, and he thinks he may reasonably anticipate a Happy New Year. Going out into the streets in the early morning of this great holiday, we should find them strewn with the crimson paper of exploded crackers. These fireworks are believed to be very effectual in driving away evil spirits. It is said that the original idea in their manufacture was to imitate the crackling sound of burning bamboos, which were once used for the same purpose. Beggars always throng the streets at this time, and reap a large harvest, since no one cares to refuse to give them a trifle, lest they should have to begin the year with a curse, even if it be only from a beggar's lips. Many rich men give very liberally at this great festival; tickets for rice are widely distributed, and sums of money, frequently given anonymously, are sent to the families of the very poor.

The front doors of most of the houses are usually decorated with new 'mën shin,' or door spirits, on New Year's morning. These are gaudily-coloured pictures of two generals of past ages. It is said that the emperor who was at that time reigning in China had a dream, in which he was informed that evil spirits were attempting to invade his palace. To prevent their entrance, he commanded two of his bravest

warriors to keep guard at the palace gates. The spirits, frightened by their warlike appearance, were afraid to enter, and since the death of these famous generals, it is said their pictures have been found to be equally efficacious. These pictures remain upon the doors all through the year, though the beating of the wind and rain upon them often leaves little but dilapidated fragments when the last month comes.

Above the doors a bunch of cypress, together with some sheets of mock money and gold and silver paper ingots, is hung, and doorways are often decorated with fringes of scarlet paper fancifully cut out, having fastened upon it the character which stands for happiness. Strips of scarlet paper as scrolls are also used to decorate the interior of the houses, the motto written upon them having always some fortunate meaning.

On New Year's morning, when a Chinaman meets a friend, he clasps his own hands, and moving them up and down before him, encased in his long sleeves, bows low and repeats the words, 'kung-she, kung-she,' or, 'I congratulate you,' which is equivalent to our phrase, 'I wish you a Happy New Year.'

Many people do not make ceremonious calls on New Year's Day, but defer them till a day or two later. Not a few, wearied out with the vigil and ceremonies of the night, spend the day in rest and quiet. Only here and there you hear the sounds that seem to be so musical to Chinese ears—the banging of gongs or cymbals, or the squeaking of a Chinese flute. Every one who is abroad is dressed in their best clothing; the children are perfectly gorgeous in their coats of many colours, while the shoes, caps, and collars of the babies are all decorated with many-coloured embroidery. As the weather is cold, all the garments are wadded, and the children look like so many round balls, or, when a little older, something like bolsters. We begin

to wonder sometimes where all the grand apparel has been kept all the year ; and at this season foreigners are not unfrequently puzzled by the arrival, among other visitors, of a gentleman who, to a new-comer, would doubtless appear to be moving in a high position in society. There is probably something familiar about the features of the visitor who thus calls to offer his congratulations. The mystery is explained when the foreigner is informed that the gorgeously-attired gentleman is Mr. So-and-So's cook, or some workman whom he has employed during the year.

Feasting, visiting, gambling, and seeing theatrical performances are some of the amusements of the season. Nearly every evening fireworks are let off in great quantities. On the fourth day of the month preparations are made for receiving back again the god of the kitchen, who, it is supposed, has been absent, spending his New Year's holidays in the invisible regions, since the twenty-fourth of the twelfth month. He is believed to have carried thither a report of the conduct of the family during the past year. A paper horse and various other things necessary for his journey are usually burned by the household on the evening of his supposed departure. Throughout the whole of the New Year's festivities, idolatrous worship, either of spirits or of gods, is so intermixed with social customs as to make that season a very trying one to Chinese Christians. They are always unmercifully persecuted by their heathen friends when they refuse to take part in idolatrous ceremonies. One boy I knew was so convinced that it was wrong to worship the false gods, or to bow before the ancestral tablets, that he begged his father to excuse him from it. When the man knew his son had been hearing of the true God in the Glad Tidings Hall of the neighbouring city, his anger knew no bounds. He

MANDARINS IN THEIR OFFICIAL DRESSES.

stripped the boy of all his outer clothing, and after giving him a severe beating, sent him out into the streets.

Not unfrequently at this season some of the gods are taken out for a ride in sedan-chairs. It is believed that the families residing in the streets along which they pass will be free from sickness and pestilence during the year.

The fifteenth of the first moon brings with it the great Feast of Lanterns, when the city is illuminated with lanterns suspended on long poles from the roofs of the houses. The scene seems changed into a city of fairy-land, for even the poorest families put out a lantern above the roof of their cottage. They do not burn long, and one after another the lights die out, but the revelry in the houses and the frequent explosion of fireworks continue till far on into the night. On the evening of the Feast of Lanterns more women are seen upon the streets than at other times, custom allowing them to come out and witness the grand illumination.

I have spoken first of the New Year's festivals, since they are by far the most important. There is another, however, which often precedes it, according to our reckoning of time, while in the Chinese calendar it is often oddly arranged that the festival of 'Welcoming the Spring' occurs in the last month of the year. The great feature in the procession which is formed in honour of the day is a life-size figure of a water buffalo—the common domestic animal of China. The framework is composed of bamboo splints, covered with paper of various colours. The sheets are said to be pasted on either by a blind man or under the direction of a fortune-teller, and are believed to predict the weather of the year, and also to give curious information on various other subjects. If there is much white paper, rains and floods are expected to prevail over the land; if red

predominates, there will be many fires, and the summer will prove unusually hot. Yellow indicates plentiful harvest, and a favourable year is thus predicted.

The ceremony of 'receiving the spring' takes place outside the east gate of the city, since it is from the East that spring is supposed to come. An altar is usually erected before the figure of the buffalo, and the god of the land and grain; then the prefect of the city, with other mandarins, attired in their richest robes, do reverence before them. The same evening, the paper buffalo is broken up into fragments, and the man who succeeds in obtaining a portion of it fancies that in consequence his own buffalo will prosper during the year.

The next great festival occurs in the bright spring-tide of the year, when the country is fragrant with the sweet scent of the bean-flower, and the willows and graceful bamboos are looking lovely in their fresh foliage. School-boys at this time receive a few days' vacation, in order that they may take part in this festival, which, like all Chinese holidays, has a religious signification. It is known as Tsing-Ming, and is the festival of the tombs. At this time every Chinaman visits the graves of his ancestors, burning incense and paper-money, and offering sacrifices there. So universal is this custom, that if these ceremonies are neglected for three years in succession, or, at any rate, if for that period the sheets of paper-money, kept in place by stones or a heap of earth, are not seen upon the graves, the land is liable to be taken possession of by its original owners, and the plot sold to another family. Chinese burying-grounds are always outside the walls of their cities. It is an impressive sight to see the innumerable mounds of earth, many of them unmarked by tree or stone, others with a small slab at the head bearing the name and date of the death of the departed. The

tombs of the wealthier families are usually on some hill-side, on a spot specially chosen by geomancers, but I am speaking of the graves of the common people. They stretch away over the grassy plains farther than the eye can reach, till it sometimes seems as if the cities of the dead in China were even more densely crowded than the cities of the living.

A day is always fixed in the Imperial Calendar for the commencement of this festival, which is sometimes spoken of as the Sweeping of the Graves, but the actual visit to the tombs can be made either a few days before or after, to suit the convenience of the families. Before the ceremonies commence, some members of the family put in order the little plot of ground, pulling up the weeds and tall rank grass which have grown wild above it. Whole families come out and take part in the service—women and children as well as men. They carry with them little basins containing various kinds of food, such as fish and fowl, pork, and cakes of different kinds. These, with cups of wine, are ranged in order before the grave, and candles and incense having been lighted, one by one the men and boys of the family, according to age, stand up, reverently bowing and knocking their heads to the ground. After this a large quantity of paper-money is burnt to supply the spirits with pocket-money for their various needs, and then a number of crackers are exploded. Offerings are then made to the god who is supposed to be in charge of that part of the country, and food is also arranged at a little distance from the graves, and offered to the beggar spirits, which are supposed to be as numerous in the spirit-world as in the streets of Chinese cities. Whenever departed spirits receive a large offering from their descendants, it is considered certain that the beggar-spirits will behave as they would do in this world, and so by their

demands for charity disturb the relatives of the worshippers, and prevent them from enjoying their feast in peace. Therefore the beggars receive an offering as well as the friends, and in this way it is believed all are satisfied.

Standing by one of these graves one day at this festival, on a bright spring evening, I saw a family going through these ceremonies, and a very little boy was with them. He watched his elders carefully, and then was put up to clasp his small hands and do reverence also. When the worship was over we began to talk to the little company. 'Why do you let a child so small take part in this service?' we asked, looking at the little fellow, who seemed greatly to enjoy the burning of the paper and exploding of the crackers. The father, a grave, courteous Chinaman, replied, 'We bring them thus early to teach them their duty, so that when they grow older they may never neglect to worship at the tombs, and will attend to our wants when we have passed into the spirit-world.'

Upon returning home the people carry with them small branches of trees, slips of firs, or boughs of wild azaleas. These sprays of greenery are usually placed in a vase before the spirit tablets in the home of the family. To some of the poor people living in the towns this is their only day in the country during the year.

Over the doors of the houses, during the time of this festival, a willow branch is usually suspended. It is believed to be useful in attracting the spirits of the dead to come and partake of the essence of food prepared for them and placed before the ancestral tablets as well as at the graves. It is also believed that not only the spirits of the dead but a large number of evil spirits are set free to visit the earth at this feast, and the

willow branch, while it attracts the spirits related to the family, frightens away any that are not welcome.

The festival which ranks next, in a Chinese boy's estimation, to the grand New Year's holiday, is the Feast of the Dragon Boats. It is sometimes spoken of as the 'Children's Festival.' The great feature in the festivities is the racing of the dragon boats, of which, in populous cities, there are sometimes twenty or more. These boats are long and narrow, and will carry ten to thirty men. The body and stern are gaily painted, and the bow is shaped like the raised head of a dragon with gaping jaws. A large drum is placed in the centre of the boat, and much noise is made by beating gongs. A boy sitting up on the dragon's head directs the movements of the rowers with a flag which he holds in his hands.

Crowds of people assemble on the river banks to watch the boats and the racing. The successful crews receive prizes, and much jealousy is excited, and quarrels and fights often conclude the day's performances. Accidents not unfrequently occur from the boats coming into collision with each other.

This grand Chinese holiday had its origin in an event which occurred about 500 B.C. At that time there lived a very wise and prudent minister of state, whose name was Ken Yuen. The prince he served was a man of violent temper and bad character, and when petitioned by his minister to introduce some reforms into the government of the country, he degraded and at last dismissed him. Unable to survive the disgrace he had sustained, Ken Yuen flung himself into the river, and thus put an end to his life. Some fishermen who saw him disappear searched diligently for his body, but it was not found. Ever since, upon the anniversary of the death of this honest official, boats have gone out casting offerings on the river for the spirit

DRAGON BOAT.

of the departed, and going through the ceremony of searching for his body.

On one occasion, it is said, the holiday-making worshippers were surprised by the appearance of Ken Yuen himself, who complained that the offerings intended for him were always stolen by an enormous reptile that made its home in the waters. Since that time the dragon boats have been used at this festival, with the idea of frightening away the reptile of which Ken Yuen complained.

In the eighth month of the year the Festival of the Moon is held; it is sometimes called the 'Feast of Rewarding the Moon.'

Chinese children do not talk of the 'Man in the Moon,' but they say there is a rabbit there engaged in pounding rice, or, some say, medicines.

At this feast everybody eats moon-cakes, which can be obtained in great variety. Most of them are round like the moon, but they have curious figures on them, such as fishes and animals, among them the mythical rabbit. Some are painted with spots of bright colour, and others adorned with gold-leaf.

The worship of the moon is one of great antiquity in all nations. The prophet Jeremiah refers to the worship of the Queen of Heaven in his day, and to the incense that was burned and the cakes that were offered before her.

The Chinese say that their festival has an historical origin. The story they tell is as follows:—One evening, the Emperor Ming Wong was walking in his palace grounds accompanied by some of his priestly advisers. The conversation turned upon the question, 'Was the moon inhabited or not?' The tutor of the young prince replied by asking him if he would like to pay a visit to it and see. He answered in the affirmative.

The priest then threw his staff into the air, and it became a bridge over which he and his pupil passed to the brilliant luminary. They found it inhabited by beautiful women, who lived in magnificent palaces surrounded by charming gardens. The prince would fain have lingered amid these scenes of loveliness, but was called upon by his tutor to depart. On their way to earth the priest asked his pupil to play upon his lute, which he carried with him, and of which he was very fond. They were just drawing near to the city of Nanking, and hearing what they concluded was celestial music, the inhabitants rushed to the roofs of their houses. The prince, advised by his companion, showered down upon the people the cash he carried with him.

Upon his return to his palace the prince was inclined to fancy all his adventures had been undertaken in the land of dreams, when a memorial was received from the governor-general of the province over which he had passed, telling a story of wonderful music and showers of cash which had been heard and seen by the inhabitants of that district on the fifteenth of the eighth month.

Of course the emperor was convinced that his trip to the moon was a reality, and ordered that henceforth the people should set apart the day on which he made his wonderful journey as a time of general rejoicing—a festival in honour of the moon.

CHAPTER VIII

CHINESE IDOLATRY AND SUPERSTITIONS

'How do Chinese children learn to worship idols?' I can imagine you asking.

Come with me and I will take you to one of their great gloomy temples.

Not on a Sabbath, for there is no day of rest in China, but either on the first or fifteenth of the month, for these are the dates upon which people usually visit the temples.

We must go up the flight of wide stone steps at the entrance, and as we enter shall see two tall images with very ugly faces and brilliantly painted coats, which are called 'Guardians of the Gate.'

Walking on into the temple, which looks dull and shadowy in the dim light, we shall come to the shrine of the great idol in whose honour the temple was built. A number of other images are ranged around it: they are the servants of the god, and large rings of incense are burning before it.

In some temples Buddhist priests sit in rows repeating in a sort of chant words of prayer which they do not understand at all, since they are in another language. See the mothers bringing their little children forward and teaching them to clasp their hands and bow down, knocking their heads to the ground as they worship the senseless idol! If it is the first time, the

children are afraid, and sometimes say, 'I can't do it. I never shall do it.' Then they watch closely while their mothers once

TWO BUDDHIST BONZES OR PRIESTS.

more show them how it is done. Afterwards they are sometimes rewarded with little presents, which they are told have been given to them by the idol. But if they are terrified and

afraid to worship, they are told stories of the terrible things that happen to people who do not ask the protection of the ugly idols.

Nearly all the gods in whose honour Chinese temples are erected are the images of people who lived in India or China hundreds or thousands of years ago, and have since been deified and are worshipped. It is the same as if in England people were to bow down before images of King Alfred, Shakespeare, Lord Nelson, or the Duke of Wellington.

Sometimes, soon after children have been worshipping at a temple, they will fall ill, or some accident will happen to them. Then the parents immediately fancy the child has offended the god, and do all they can to make it forget its anger.

One night, when we were coming home from our week-night service in the city of Wuchang, we passed a temple brightly lighted up. It had been built in honour of the god of the land and grain. It is unusual to see people worshipping at a temple late in the evening, and we turned aside to look at the people bending there. Two men were very devoutly burning incense and paper-money, and their faces were very sad. When they had finished and were preparing to leave, we asked why they had come to the temple at so late an hour. The elder of the two men turned towards us a very anxious face and replied, 'It is just three days now since I with my only son came here to worship. On the way home my little boy had a serious fall, which has injured him severely. He is now very ill, and I fear may not recover. I feel sure he must in some way have offended the god, and so I have brought large quantities of paper-money and am sacrificing at this shrine, hoping that his anger may be turned away, and then my child will recover.'

BUDDHIST PRIESTS.

How thankful we were to be able to do something to comfort the poor idol worshipper! We told him of a Father in heaven who loves all His children, and who alone could make the little boy well again.

Let me take you to one or two more of the many temples in this city in which I have been living. Quite near to the Mission House is one in connection with a large printing establishment. It contains an immense gilt figure of Buddha, who, they say, leads people to the western heaven. Before this enormous figure you may often see offerings of flowers and rice placed. A large number of Buddhist priests live in the monastery adjoining this temple. They dress in long loose yellow robes, and their heads, being shaven, are quite bald. They may not eat meat, but live solely upon vegetables and rice. The gong is sounding for their mid-day meal. The abbot sits on a daïs in the centre of the refectory, and the priests are ranged in rows on either side of him. There are about sixty monks living in this place. Before they take their meal they sing or chant a grace, but they do not understand the words they sing. A little of the food is then placed as an offering on a stone slab just outside the door. They eat their meal in perfect silence. When all have finished, and the chop-sticks are placed in order by the side of the blue basins, the gong is again struck, and the priests file out silently one by one.

Buddhists think it is an act of very great merit to preserve the life of any animal, and frequently when people come to worship at these temples they make a vow that they will preserve the life of some living creature. So one frequently sees in Buddhist temples, fowls, ducks, and geese, or pigs and sheep, and also a pond filled with fish which have been rescued from

the tanks in which they are exposed for sale by the fishmongers. At one temple I once saw a very ancient pig. The priests said it was a hundred years old, which was of course untrue. But it must have been quite venerable for a pig, and was such a deplorable-looking object that the next time I was there, I was not sorry to hear that the pig was dead. Some people make a vow to release a large number of sparrows. These birds are kept—a large number together—in cages hanging outside the poulterers' shops; people buy twenty or thirty of them for the purpose of setting them free.

Just outside the east gate of the city of Wuchang there is a celebrated temple known as the Temple of Hades, and the god who is supposed to rule in the unseen regions is worshipped there. The first figure that would attract your notice is one far above life-size, with a black beard, and flowing white robes, wearing a tall conical hat, with an umbrella over his shoulder. In his hand he holds the end of a chain, which is fastened round the representation of the wasted form of a dying man, and he is supposed to be dragging him along to judgment. When you ask a Chinaman what he thinks will happen to him when he dies, a common answer is, 'Oh, Wutsang will come for me, I suppose.'

The little burial-ground belonging to the Chinese Christians is just outside the grim walls of this temple. Sometimes when we have gathered round the grave-side, to hold a short service before committing to the earth the remains of some departed Christian, crowds from the heathen temple have come and joined us. How strange the glad words of triumphant faith sounded to them! they know nothing of a bright hope beyond the grave, a rest 'prepared for the people of God.'

At both sides of this Temple of Hades are some terrible

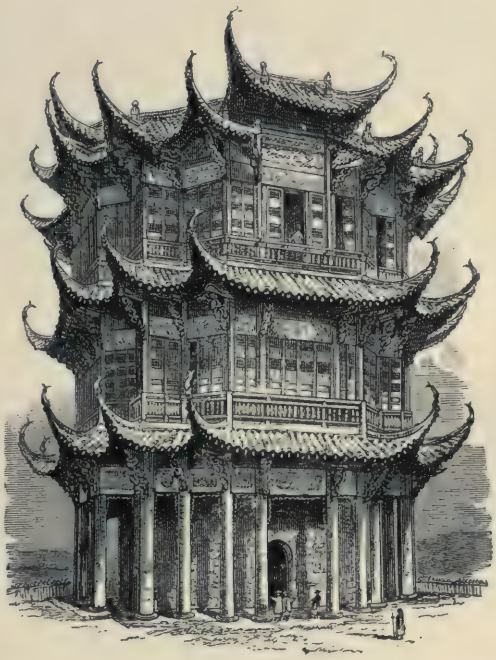
groups of figures which are too frightful for me to describe to you in detail. I only mention them at all that you may see how sad and hopeless is the heathen faith from which we are seeking to win these people. These groups represent persons being judged for their sins, and some are enduring the punishments of the Buddhist hell. Here you see the figure of a man standing before the judges of the unseen world. He is on a raised platform, and a mirror is hung before him, in which he will see reflected the form he is to assume when born into the world again. The man is starting back in horror as he sees the figure of an ox reflected there.

But before this second birth, they believe he has to endure many fearful tortures, and in successive groups we see him surrounded by demons who are engaged in tormenting him. He is thrown on a hill of knives, sawn asunder, tied to a pillar heated red hot, boiled in oil, and pounded in a mortar. Before he is born into the world again he must drink of the tea of forgetfulness, which is represented as being sold by two old women who sit at the gates of Hades. This tea, they say, makes men lose all remembrance of their former lives on earth.

At the feet of the tall image with the chain there are always heaps of shoes lying—offerings from people who believe the idol has listened to their entreaties and spared the lives of their friends. Here is a baby-boy's tiny slipper, and there the shoe of a grown-up man. Oh, how sad it makes one to go into these places and see people trusting in these useless idols! Sometimes I have seen men kneeling before these shrines pleading very earnestly. One, I remember, was asking that his life might long be spared; and another, who was troubled with asthma, prayed that when the time came for Wutsang to

drag him away he would remember how short his breath was and walk slowly.

Another famous temple is the Yellow Stork Tower, a low pagoda, to which the following story is attached :—Long, long ago there lived in this city of Wuchang a man named Shin, who was in business as a wine merchant. Now it happened that among the occasional frequenters of his house was a man whose name was Lu-Tsou. To this customer Mr. Shin had always shown much kindness, treating him as an intimate friend, and never being at all particular about the payment of the wine account. The thought had never entered the wine merchant's head that the person he was treating so hospitably was other than an ordinary mortal, till one day, Lu-Tsou, as a token of gratitude for the kindness he had received, turned the water of a well in Mr. Shin's garden into wine. At the same time he took an orange, and dividing it into four quarters, murmured over it some potent charm, and immediately it was changed into a stork, and settled upon a high pole in the wine merchant's garden. The fame of the wonderful stork and the delicately flavoured



THE YELLOW STORK TOWER.

wine spread through the city, and customers thronged Mr. Shin's house till he became so wealthy that, in gratitude to his benefactor, he determined to build in his honour a fine temple, or three-storied pagoda. It stands there to-day, and from its upper storey a fine view is obtained of the surrounding country. The broad stream of the magnificent Yang-tse-kiang flows past it. On the farther shore are the craggy slopes of the Hanyang hill, crowned with its white-walled temple, while the thickly populated mart of Hankow stretches away at its foot. From the opposite side of the tower we look out upon the grand provincial city, which is cut into three portions by low green hills, while the dwellings of the city lie crowded together in the valleys. Here and there the scene is relieved by the queer curled eaves of some temples or guilds, or the walled gardens of some official's residence.

This Yellow Stork Tower, with the temples rising up one behind another in its rear, form the principal recreation ground of the city. The lower storey of the tower is always thronged with fortune-tellers and gambling tables.

A Tauist priest stands at the foot of the winding staircase and begs a few cash of each visitor. Crowds of Chinamen are usually sitting round little tables in the upper storey, enjoying a cup of tea with cakes and melon-seeds, for the wine and the wonderful well of the legend have disappeared. In the centre of the top storey there is an image of the deified philosopher Lu-Tsou, playing on his lute, while he sits on the back of a stork, which with outspread wings is preparing to carry him through the regions of space. But the strangest sight of all is to be found in one of the temples behind the tower. This is the image of a god fast asleep, kept under a glass case! When Lu-Tsou goes through that part of the country, they say he stops

ORPHAN ISLAND, POYANG LAKE.

and sleeps there. Are you not reminded of a text in your Bibles which tells us of the unceasing care of God over His people, and says, 'Behold, He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep'?

There are many more temples, hundreds I could tell you of in most great Chinese cities.

I have told you something of one or two, but should like to mention one more, situated in a lovely spot, not in Wuchang, but on the Orphan Island, in the Poyang Lake.

Let me tell you of a visit I paid to it once. We had been on a journey of many days in our little boat on that great lake, and in returning, anchored our small craft at the foot of the flight of steps, and climbed up the steep ascent till we reached the temple buildings. The whole island was like a garden, the grey old rocks being covered with lovely climbing plants, while the fragrance of the Chinese jessamine scented the air. Inside the temple were a multitude of gods of various names, but the one that interested me more than any other was the shrine of the Goddess of Mercy. There she sat on a throne decorated with magnificent carving, and over her head was a canopy composed of cloth of gold. But what attracted me most was two large screens on either side of the apartment, which were completely covered from top to bottom with offerings in the shape of beautiful embroidered leaves or tiny banners, which had each been worked by some woman or girl in the neighbourhood. Some came from homes of grinding poverty, where every cash was needed to purchase daily food. And yet every one seemed to have used the finest and best materials, no one grudged denying themselves in order to present this offering to the useless idol which had no power to help or save. As I looked at the beautiful work and thought of the skilful fingers which had

embroidered this miniature landscape, of the girlish hands which had traced this simple border of flowers, how I longed for the time when the glad news of Jesus, all-powerful to save, shall brighten every Chinese home! Do we always offer to the Saviour who died for us the best we have to give, anything that costs no self-denial and is a real sacrifice to us—or are the heathen more in earnest than we are?

If I were to go on to tell you the names only of all the gods and goddesses worshipped in China, you would grow quite tired of hearing them, there are so many. So I will only mention a few of the principal ones.

A very strange thing about them is that the greater number of the people whose images are now worshipped as gods in China, are by no means individuals whom we should feel inclined to reverence or even respect, if we are to believe the stories told of them by their worshippers.

There is a God of Thieves, who is said to have been a great thief himself in former days; another god to which gamblers go for help; and even a god of swine, who helps people to find their pigs when they lose them.

Even animals are worshipped also.

The monkey is supposed to have power over evil spirits, the tiger to preserve little children from danger, and so offerings are made to them. The viceroys and high mandarins in many parts of China worship the fox. Foxes are supposed in some peculiar way to take charge of the official seals, and so they must be worshipped by the rulers of the land; and the Dragon King, who is believed to be able to give or withhold rain when it is needed, is worshipped not only by viceroys, but by the emperor himself.

'If you do not believe in our other gods,' the Chinese say

sometimes, 'surely you will not deny that there is a God of Thunder! See how he strikes people dead who have offended him.' It is the common belief in China that those who are killed by lightning (or thunder, as they say) are persons who have lived evil lives and displeased the gods.

Not long ago a man who worked in an idol-maker's shop lost his life in this way. I remember when the people were discussing the matter; they all agreed that, as they did not know of anything seriously wrong in his life, he must have been a very bad person in some previous state of existence, and was thus paying the penalty for crimes committed then.

The God of Fire is always worshipped after the frequent fires which occur in every Chinese city. He is supposed, I believe, by most people, to be rather the deliverer from fire than the cause of it.

A story is told in connection with a temple erected in his honour by a former emperor after the destruction of one of his finest palaces. In the midst of the fire the emperor declared he saw the figure of a little old man with a long white beard. Now this was considered very extraordinary, since the images of the God of Fire are always represented with red beards, and are supposed to be connected with flames of fire. The emperor was very anxious to erect a temple in honour of the god, whom he feared he had offended; so he ordered his attendants to go to every temple in the city and try and discover the God of Fire who had a white beard. This was a difficult matter, and all the principal temples in the city were searched without success. At last, in a dilapidated temple outside one of the city gates, it was found that there was in existence an idol which, being minus a beard, had been supplied with one made of frayed-out hemp.

The case was reported to the emperor, who visited the ruined temple in great state, doing reverence before the image, and vowing that he would build for it a temple as fine as any in the city.

The new building was erected on the site of the neglected ruined shrine.

The God of War is worshipped by many others as well as soldiers, for they believe that he will make them strong and courageous. So lately as 1855 they say he appeared before the imperial troops and led them to victory over the rebels; and since then they have raised him to higher rank among the gods than before.

Nearly every trade in China has its special patron, but the God of Wealth is honoured by merchants of every rank. His image, set in a small niche with incense burning before it, is seen in most Chinese shops, and he is believed to help his worshippers to become speedily rich.

The Goddess of Mercy, Ma-Chu, the Goddess of Sailors, and an idol called 'Mother,' have a large number of worshippers, especially among women and children. When there is a storm at sea, or on one of the great lakes or rivers of China, the sailors cry piteously for mercy to the 'Venerable Mother Ma-Chu,' who, they believe, will come to their rescue.

The original of the goddess, if we may be allowed that term, died when a girl of twenty. During her lifetime she told a wonderful story of a remarkable dream she had. Her father and brothers were seafaring men, and, while anxiously expecting their return, she dreamed she was out at sea watching three junks in great danger. She seized two of them in either hand, and the third she held between her teeth, and swimming thus, she had almost reached a haven of safety. But, hearing her

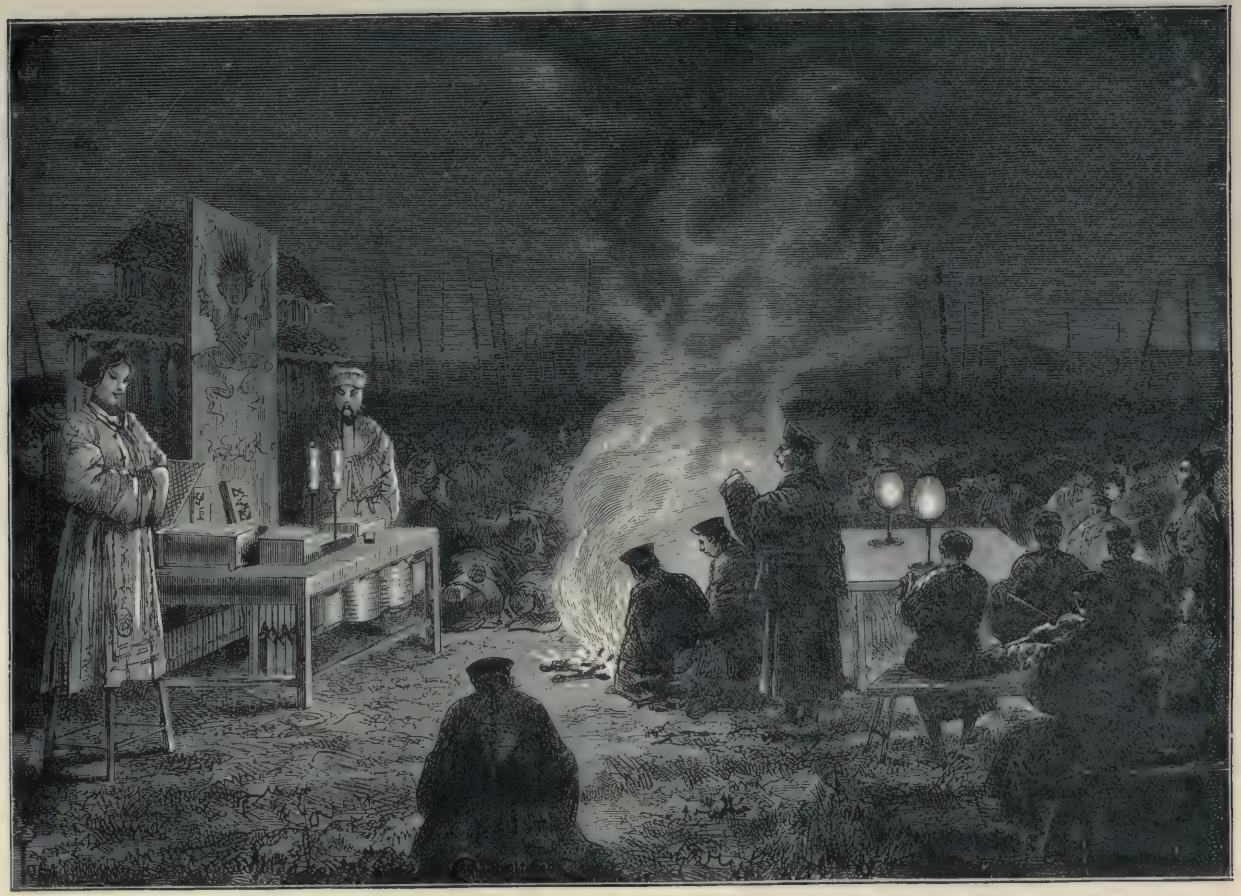
mother call to her, she felt compelled to answer, and so loosed her hold upon the third boat, and awaking found it was a dream. But some days after the brothers returned, telling of the wonderful deliverance of their two junks by an invisible power, and how their father's boat was wrecked when almost within sight of land. It was evident to all who heard the story that Ma-Chu, without knowing it, was possessed of miraculous power, and since her death the honour due to a goddess has been paid to her.

Little boys and girls are very early taught to worship the goddess called 'Mother,' who, with a large number of attendants, is supposed carefully to watch over children and protect them through the diseases of infancy.

I have told you much about the gods of China, in which so many millions of the Chinese place their trust; but some of the wisest men of the nation have little faith in them. Yet every one believes in the necessity for worshipping the spirits of their ancestors if they would be prosperous in life. As I said before, every man is believed to have three souls; one, at death, enters the spirit tablet—a sort of carved cabinet with tiny folding doors, containing a small wooden tablet upon which the deceased person's name is written.

People will occasionally be found who laugh at idol worship and have little faith in most superstitious observances, and yet they believe firmly in the necessity for, and possibility of, supplying the needs of departed relatives by placing constant offerings before the spirit tablet.

Sometimes a priest will inform a family that their friend in the unseen world is in great difficulties. They must send him large sums of money, and religious services must be held for several days. In their anxiety and grief they listen to all the priest tells them.



SERVICE FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE DEAD.

A service of this kind took place one day in the garden of a house quite near to us. The father of a little boy I knew well had died about a year before, and it was his spirit that the priests said was in trouble. The poor boy, who was his father's eldest son, was the principal actor in the ceremonies. He was a bright, intelligent little fellow, but it will be long before I forget the look of terror that was in the child's face as, dressed in his white mourning robes, he followed the directions of the priests and bowed rapidly at frequent intervals, while incense and paper-money were burned, gongs beaten and crackers exploded.

Besides what may be strictly called religious observances, the Chinese have many strange and superstitious customs. It is not proper in China to have walls frequently whitewashed, for white is the colour of mourning; it is very rash to have windows in a house, lest they should afford ingress to evil spirits.

If your front door faces a street or lane, you must be sure and erect a wall or wooden screen immediately opposite to it, to prevent evil spirits from finding an entrance. Roads in China are rarely made straight, but wind and twist in a most wearying and perplexing manner, for it is believed spirits have an objection to these winding paths, while on the broad straight way they will certainly be met with.

When there is an eclipse of the sun or moon in China, it is well known that although the coming event is announced beforehand in the Chinese almanacs, it is nevertheless believed by many that the phenomenon is caused by an attempt on the part of an animal known as the Heavenly Dog to eat up the luminary. The common people seem thoroughly convinced that it is a time of very real danger, and make a most terrible

noise with gongs and cymbals till the eclipse passes over, and they believe their efforts have proved effectual, and the Heavenly Dog has been frightened away.

This 'Dog' is the source of considerable anxiety to them in another connection. One summer evening, when I had not been long in China, my curiosity was aroused by the sudden bursting out of a perfect babel of sounds from the quiet streets which skirted the Mission compound. Gongs were beaten, crackers exploded, and most of the domestic utensils of iron or tin-ware were taken out and utilized to add to the universal din. I called our servant to inquire the cause, and was informed that the note of the nine-headed bird had been heard in our neighbourhood, and everybody was in fear lest it should rest upon their house. This bird was said to have originally possessed ten heads, but one of them had long ago been bitten off by that notorious Heavenly Dog. The wound has never healed, and as the bird flies along, if it chances to rest upon a house, the blood dripping from it dooms it to destruction by fire. No wonder, when the distant croak of what was probably some solitary owl was heard, the superstitious people, fearing for the safety of their homes, seized on every available article and spared no pains in making a din sufficient to drive any bird away from their neighbourhood.

So do the Chinese people seem to spend their lives from the cradle to the grave, in constant fear of unseen and often imaginary enemies. They spend large sums of money in purchasing charms which are sold by the Tauist priest, and are constantly seeking by numberless devices to keep at bay the spirits of evil which they believe are ever striving to do them harm.

CHAPTER IX

TEACHING CHINESE CHILDREN

I HAVE told you what strange superstitions the Chinese have about the powers which they fancy are able to influence men's lives. You have heard how the children are taught to bow down and worship grim idols of wood and stone, of which terrible stories are told, and have never dreamed of a God who loves little children, watching over them with tenderest care.

We go to China to tell not only the grown-up men and women, but also the boys and girls, the good news which we have known ever since we could understand anything—the news that we have a Father in heaven, who loves us so much that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might not perish, but have everlasting life.

Perhaps you would like to know how we teach these Chinese boys and girls. First of all we have to win their confidence, and make the fathers and mothers as well as the children less afraid of us. For when we first go into a Chinese city many of the boys and girls will run away and hide themselves, afraid lest we should catch them and do some dreadful thing to them. Some of them will run after us, calling Yang-kwei-tsz, which means something like 'foreign evil spirit,' and other bad names, and a few will pick up stones and throw them at us, trying thus to drive us away.

'But why are they angry when they see us coming into

their cities?' you will ask, 'and why are they afraid of us?' Principally because we are not Chinamen, and have come from another country. The Chinese very much dislike people of other countries coming and trading, or having any other dealings with them, and most of them would be very glad if we were all driven out of China to-morrow. Englishmen and other foreigners would not have got into the country at all if it had not been for a great war which we had with them. England was victorious, and so she obliged China to open several of her ports to trade with foreigners, and to allow them to live there. And ever since, all that our nation or any other has gained from China has always been at the point of the sword, or because they were afraid of us. So it is only natural that they are not very pleased to see us walking about the streets of their cities.

There is another reason for their disliking us, and a still sadder one. There is a plant which grows over vast tracts of land in India, which you know belongs to England. It is a very innocent-looking flower, and is called the poppy. Perhaps it has done more harm than any other flower that ever grew. There is a juice that oozes from the capsules of this flower which, when dry, becomes opium, a powerful drug which millions of people in China are smoking to-day. They never sit up to smoke it, but lie down on a couch. It often gives them very strange and beautiful dreams, and so they are tempted to try it again. Before very long they find they can much more easily do without food or clothing than without their smoke of opium, and at last, when all they possess has been pawned and sold, they will even sell their wives and children to get more opium. Their faces get very haggard-looking, their eyes sunken, so that you know a confirmed opium-smoker directly you meet him in the street.

It is very sad to think that this drug that does so much harm is sent to China by Englishmen, since India belongs to them. A great deal of opium is grown in China now, for the Chinese farmers find it pays so much better than their other crops. But when England stops sending the Indian opium—which we hope she soon will do—then the best men in China will do all they can to stop the growth of it in their own land, which they see is being ruined by it. 'Where do you come from?' the Chinese often ask missionaries, and when they answer, 'From England,' we see a sneer on their faces, and they say, 'England! Ah, that is the country that sends the opium to kill our people!' So you see there are several reasons why the Chinese do not give us a very warm welcome. And since they do not like us, the officials have from the first circulated some very wicked and untrue stories about us. They say we have very powerful and efficacious medicines, and large numbers who attend our Mission hospitals know this to be true, but they add that we make these medicines out of the eyes of people who become Christians, and from the bones of little Chinese babies. No wonder then that people are afraid to let their children come near us, lest they should never see them again.

We try to win their friendship in many ways. Having learnt their language, we are soon able to say a few kind words to the children, and then we often give them some little English pictures, which delight them very much. After a while we are able to go and see their mothers in their own homes, and then they will come and see us, being curious to look at the strange things they find in our houses. What a number of questions they always have to ask us! 'Is there a sun and a moon in your country?' they inquire. 'Are there hills and trees?' 'Why do you not have black eyes like ours? Have they faded out?' 'Can you see with them several feet down

into the earth, and know where gold and silver is lying?' 'Why do Englishwomen have such large feet, just like men, instead of "golden lilies" three inches long?' 'Why do you wear your hair in such a strange fashion, instead of having it glued down on wire shapes?' 'Why do foreign ladies wear coverings over their heads when they go out of doors? It is just like the men!' These and very many more questions are constantly asked and answered. Then sometimes we sing to them English hymns that have been translated into Chinese, such as 'Jesus loves me,' 'There is a happy land,' and many more. We show them pictures too of scenes in the life of Christ, and tell them a great deal about Him. After a while they begin to think perhaps the bad reports they have heard are not quite true.

'I have often thought of coming, with my daughter, to see you,' said a mandarin's wife to me, 'but I felt so much afraid of you that I always put it off. I shall have no fear in future, for I think you are, after all, not so very unlike ourselves.' This is how, step by step, we get the people to come around us, and at last to allow their children to attend our schools.

It is much easier to do this when we are settled in a large town; but there are many millions of people in China who have never heard of Jesus and His salvation, and many cities which have never been visited by a missionary. So sometimes during the spring and autumn seasons we go and visit some of the towns that have no settled missionary, and try to tell the good news, and to sell Christian books to people who frequently have never before had an opportunity of hearing the Gospel preached. We usually take these trips in small native boats. The arched roof is of matting, tarred, to keep out the rain, and it is so low that we cannot stand quite upright in it. We are favoured with two small windows, but

they are filled up with thin sheets of oyster-shells instead of glass. By taking away one of the movable boards, we can make an opening, through which we creep on to the little bit of deck. Sometimes, when sitting inside our boat, this opening serves as a window, through which we get pretty peeps at the beautiful river scenery, or glimpses of passing junks.

The inside of our boat is furnished with two stools, and the raised locker serves us for table by day and bedstead at night. Our bedding does not take up much room, since it consists only of *pukais*, or wadded quilts, such as the Chinese use. And a comfortable bed it makes, when one is snugly rolled up in it, in Chinese fashion.

A CHINESE LADY.

Our Chinese servant is sitting in the boat, on guard. He cooks all our meals for us at a tiny charcoal stove on board, belonging to the boatman. When we reach a large country town, Mr. Bryson goes on shore, and preaches or sells books in the streets and market-places. Sometimes he is accompanied by a missionary friend, who travels in another small boat, and sometimes by a native Christian, who is very glad to tell his fellow-countrymen of what Jesus has done for him.

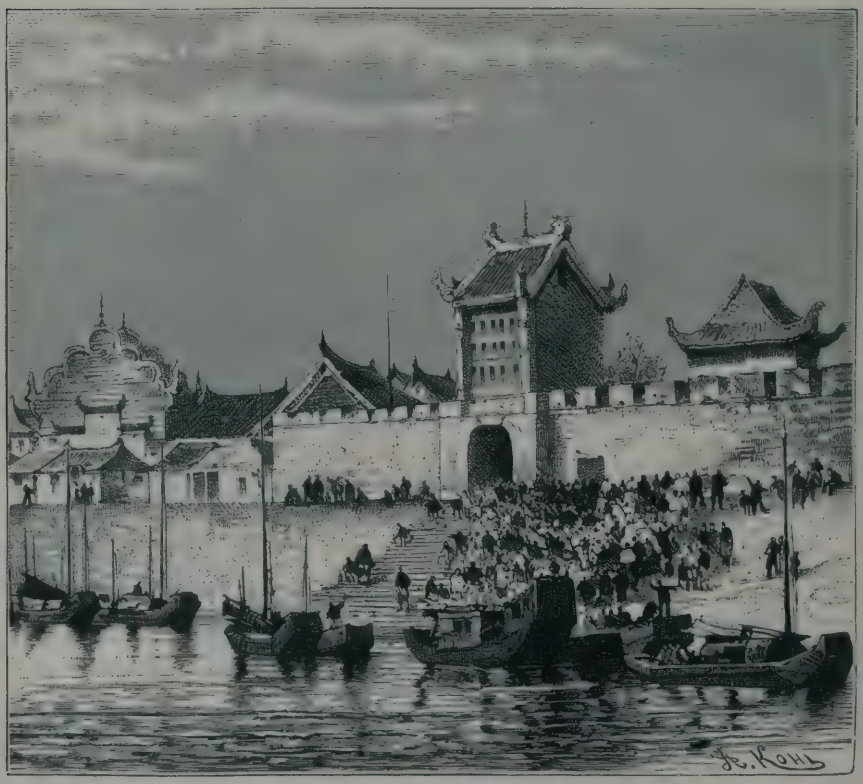
But what crowds of women and children come to the boat to see me! The boys climb up on the side of it, and small black eyes watch me curiously through many a crack and

hole, as if I were some wonderful wild animal on view for their amusement. After a while the women muster up courage, and one after another creeps into the boat, or crouches down on the tiny deck, and listens to what I have to tell them. Then the little boys and girls come forward, and are made happy with an English picture or text-card. At last so many come running from the city to our quiet anchorage, that the boatman gets alarmed. He is afraid too many will crowd on to the boat, and it will capsize. So he puts out farther from the shore. Then the people hire ferry-boats, and crowds of them come out and surround us, especially if they happen to have heard I have a little English boy on board.

They came out in this way once at a place called Pau-ngan, situated on the shores of a beautiful lake, which looked very lovely, for the trees which adorned its banks were all clothed in the brilliant tints of autumn. On the same journey we passed on to another city called Chin-nieu, where the people became very angry with us. They threw great stones on the frail mat roof of our boat, and we had entered a narrow creek, so we were quite at their mercy. After a time they became quieter, and some were willing to buy books and listen to the preaching. At other places they were so anxious to get books that they swam across the stream to obtain them. So we go on from day to day on these country journeys, sometimes being driven away from the place, and at other times meeting with people who are very glad to see and hear us. 'Is Jesus living now?' 'How is it He was not born in China?' 'If all this happened so long ago, how is it that we in this great Middle Kingdom have been so long in hearing of it?' These and many other questions are asked of us daily. Sometimes we hear of no results from these visits; only we know no work done for God can be in vain, and we believe He will

bless the seed that is sown, and make it spring up, even though it be 'after many days.'

Now and then, long after our visits, we hear of people who on these occasions for the first time heard of Jesus.



ARRIVAL OF A FOREIGNER.

They have studied the books they have bought, and then come up to the city determined to hear more of so good a religion. One earnest Christian boy heard of the Gospel first in his native town, from which the missionaries had been driven with violence. When he grew older and came to

Wuchang, he found out the chapel, and before long became a true believer in Jesus, and had to endure much persecution and suffering on account of his faith.

But to go back to the city. There we have a Chinese Mission hospital, which relieves the sufferings of many thousands of people every year. One day two little girls were brought there who were believed to be quite blind. Doctor Mackenzie, who was then in charge of it, was able to perform an operation, after which they were able to see. How glad they and their parents were you can imagine! These two girls heard about Jesus in the hospital, they learned to believe in Him, and are now living happy Christian lives in their village homes.

A boy was brought to the hospital who was suffering very great pain, because he had performed what in China is considered a meritorious action. His father was ill, and, hoping to cure him, he had actually cut a piece of flesh out of his own leg, and given it to his father among his other food, hoping that he would recover from his sickness. Very many filial sons do this in China: they are told, if they do it 'with a pure heart,' their parents will certainly recover. This poor boy was very ill indeed for a long time. Another boy, who was the son of a mandarin living in a city farther down the river, was brought to the hospital by his mother, who was on a visit to the town. He recovered from his illness, and having heard much about Jesus in the hospital, and from Mr. Owen, who used to teach him every night, he determined to become a Christian. I remember him well on the last Sunday before he left to return to his heathen home. How happy he looked, singing the glad Christian hymns in the chapel! He was going, like Joseph, far away from all who loved and worshipped the God he had chosen. But He who kept Joseph faithful in

the dark land of Egypt could keep this Chinese boy through the trials he would certainly have to endure.

I told you how, by degrees, we were able to get people to allow their children to come to our schools. Let me tell you a little about them, and the lessons they learn. We always try to obtain a Christian master, who is also a good scholar. The children get a very good Chinese education, and, in addition, they study the Bible and Catechism. They have wonderfully good memories, and I think you would find they could surpass most English children, if they were set to learn the same lesson by heart. Many of them think nothing of repeating several chapters, or even a whole Gospel, from memory; and not long ago, in a Mission school in North China, they had a boy who could repeat the whole of the New Testament through without mistake.

I should like you to hear some of our Chinese children singing. They have not very musical voices in Central China, neither had they for a long time the least idea of time. But they do thoroughly enjoy singing their hymns, many of which are translations of those you sing here in England.

During the great examination season, when some ten thousand students come up from all parts of the province to compete for their degree, it is a very busy time in the city of Wuchang.

The parents of some of our boys are very poor, and they are obliged to keep them away from school for half the day, so that they may earn a little money by carrying about baskets of nuts and cakes, and selling them to the students. On one of these occasions, I was told, by some one who heard them, that while our little scholars were trying to sell their wares they took the opportunity, every now and then, to join in singing one of their school hymns. It was a new one they had just been learning—

'In heaven there is no more sorrow;
There is no more death and pain.'

The strange sounds gathered a little crowd around the boys. 'Where did you learn that song?' asked a grave elderly man, wearing large spectacles in heavy tortoise-shell frames, giving him, in Chinese eyes, a most learned appearance. 'We were taught it at the Glad Tidings Hall,' replied the children. 'It sounds very strange, and yet there is something attractive in it,' said another student. 'It is extraordinary that the foreigners should teach children anything like that.'

We were pleased to hear that our boys had been trying to sing for Jesus, for we know how glad He is to receive the services of children, even in their earliest days.

Others, we know, repeat the lessons they have learned at school in their own homes; and some are teaching their little friends much of what they learn. One of our boys, named Tsz-Sz-Heu, had a number of little friends who were not allowed by their parents to come to the Christian school. He used, after leaving school, to tell the other boys the Bible stories he had heard there. One day, Mr. Bryson was surprised to see a number of strange boys' faces peeping into the chapel adjoining the school-room, where he had been preaching. The remarkable thing about them was, that these boys did not seem at all afraid of him, as most heathen boys would have been. He began talking to the children, and was much surprised when one little boy said, 'We know it is wrong to worship idols. The God we must serve is our Father in heaven, who sent His Son to die for us.' They went on to say, that since every one had done wrong, and all have sinned, and must be punished, Jesus died, and those who believe in Him are saved, and live for ever in heaven. 'And who taught you all this?' the children were asked. They replied that it was their little

friend, our scholar. Tsz-Sz-Heu was by no means one of our brightest boys, and we were much encouraged to find that he had himself become a little missionary, and was teaching his young companions the truths he had learned in the school.

Christmas Day is always a holiday long looked forward to by our school-children, for then we have a grand feast, and prizes are distributed. How busy they are all the day before, gathering and collecting evergreens to adorn the school-room! Then a large number of coloured Scripture pictures are arranged round the walls, and here and there pairs of scarlet Chinese scrolls are hung up, bearing a text, or having some suitable motto written upon them.

Among the native Christians there was one man who had once belonged to a wealthy family, in a far-distant province. He had wasted all his money, and was in very poor circumstances, when he came to our city and heard the Gospel first. He could write or paint the strange Chinese characters most beautifully, and had been accustomed at the New Year's season to earn a great deal of money by writing scrolls intended to serve idolatrous or superstitious purposes. He was requested to write many such after he heard the Gospel. He had not become a member of the Church, but his reply was, 'No; I have decided to join the Christians. I can have nothing to do with anything connected with idolatry.' Here is one of the mottoes he wrote for the school treat. 'The birthday of Him who brought joy to men of every land.'

Our reading desk was adorned with fragrant lemons peeping out among their glossy leaves; then there were 'heavenly bamboos,' with their brilliant berries, and many other plants.

When Christmas morning came, you may be sure the children and their parents were all there in very good time, attired in their best clothing, in honour of the day. First we

sang a hymn. It was 'Hark! the herald angels sing,' in Chinese, of course; then, after prayer, the beautiful story of the Babe of Bethlehem was read, followed by a Christmas address from the pastor, which seemed to be full of interest to the smallest children. After the conclusion of the service the prizes were given out. What an exciting moment it was, for parents as well as children, when one child after another came up to receive the prize allotted to him!

Every one was made happy with something, though all the gifts were not of equal value. Here were some gay little Chinese caps—just the thing for the New Year's season, which was so soon coming on. Here were some lead pencils and pocket-knives, which had been sent out from England by some kind friends of Chinese children. Here were books filled with pictures, which would give the children and their friends pleasure for many a long day to come.

When every child had received a present, it was about time for the feast to commence. You would have been surprised to see how fast the chop-sticks go to work, and how quickly the rice basins need refilling. Eight children sit at each table. In the centre of every table stands a basin of stewed fish or meat, as the case may be. Every boy helps himself as he feels inclined, according to Chinese custom, out of this centre dish, but each child has a rice basin to him or herself. Beside the day school, we have a Sunday school, which is attended by all the week-day scholars and as many others as they can persuade to come with them by holding out the promise of a little English picture to be given by the teacher.

Some of the older lads have left school and are now in situations. They have received permission from their masters to attend the school, but unfortunately the number who are thus allowed to come is very small.

The school is opened just like Sunday schools at home, with singing and prayer, and then the teachers, who are all members of the Church, take their separate classes and go over the same lesson, which most of them have prepared with the pastor in the early morning of the previous day. When teaching-time is over, a coloured illustration of the lesson for the day is hung upon the black-board, and the children are questioned upon what they have been taught.

Quite a forest of hands goes up as a proof that they can answer nearly every question; and I think that English children who were studying the same lesson would have to be very attentive, or they would find the Chinese boys and girls could pass the examination more successfully than they.

It is more difficult to get girls to our school than boys, but those who come, if only allowed to attend regularly, we find quite as bright and intelligent as their brothers. Before the principal festivals of the year, we always speak very earnestly to the children about the sin of idolatry, for we know they will see so much of it around them on every hand.

After one New Year's holiday we found that some of our boys had been to several of the idol shrines, and pulling out the sticks of incense burning before them, had thrown them away. In one small temple they had knocked down one or two small figures of the attendants of the idol, to show the people they were of no use, and no one need be afraid of them. But of course we had to condemn such lawless proceedings.

Some who were scholars when we first commenced the school are now almost young men.

One of them is hoping to become a preacher of the Gospel; some are in situations in places of business, or in service, and are trying to live as Christians.

CHAPTER X

A LETTER FOR YOU

A CHINESE letter is lying before me as I take up my pen to write this last chapter about the young people of China. Such a strange letter you would think it, written on thin paper of a yellowish colour, with pink flowers and figures all over it. It was sent to me by a Chinese Christian, but it contains a message for all the boys and girls who read this book. It is a message of thankfulness, telling how glad the writer is that missionaries came to his country, and that he has heard of Jesus, and is now happy because he believes in Him. It is a message of earnest entreaty, because it tells how much more needs to be done before the many millions in that dark land of China can hear of that Saviour who died that they might live.

When I was coming away from China, a Chinese Christian said to me, 'I may not be able to write you a letter and send it all the way to England, but every day I will send a message of prayer to Heaven for you.'

That, I think, is the best kind of letter; and though you cannot answer the Chinese letter of which I have spoken, from the quiet of your English homes you can constantly send up earnest prayers for these Chinese children of whom I have told you, that they may be taught to love the Saviour, who put His hands on little children's heads and said, 'Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not.'

A lady was talking to me the other day about Mission work in China, and she said, 'I always pray for the Chinese people every day; and then I feel that I cannot stop at praying, I must do something to help forward the work among them.' Do any of the children who read this feel like that lady?

I have a little pile of letters also which I prize very much. They have each been sent to me with gifts to take to Chinese children. Many of these presents are pictures and illustrated magazines. Some of them are pretty scrap-books and albums, many of which I can see have been much prized by their young owners. But the little writers say, 'We want to do something for Jesus and for the Chinese children.'

This is one way in which children may help us in teaching Chinese boys and girls. But there are many other ways, for money is needed very much to send out more missionaries. Sometimes men and women who would be very glad to go out to China and teach the children, cannot go because there is no money to send them; and yet there are still many large provinces, larger even than this England of ours, where they have no missionary at all, or else only one or two. Just think if there were only one minister in all England, how very few of you boys and girls would ever have an opportunity of hearing him preach. But that is how it is in China.

Long, long ago, our ancestors in England were very much like the Chinese, and were bowing down to idols and offering human sacrifices upon the mountain tops and in the forest glades. But Christian people in other lands sent to those who came before us the bright light of the Gospel, and so we ought to pass it on to others who are now in darkness.

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